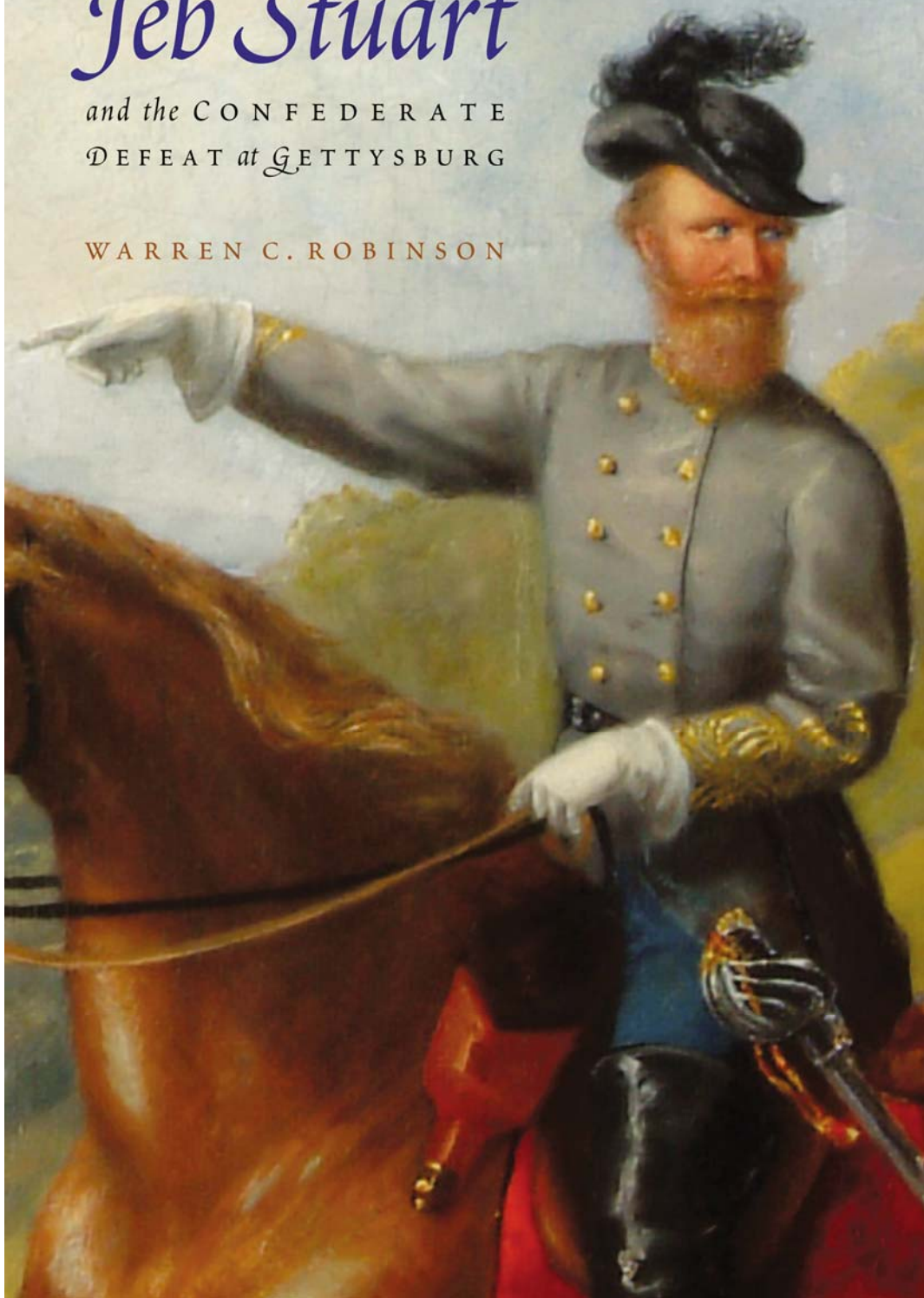


# Jeb Stuart

*and the CONFEDERATE  
DEFEAT at GETTYSBURG*

WARREN C. ROBINSON



## Jeb Stuart and the Confederate Defeat at Gettysburg

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Defeat *at* Gettysburg



Warren C. Robinson

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Set in Janson Text by Bob Reitz.

To Sarah, who is the silent coauthor of everything I do



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## Preface

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Gen. James Ewell Brown (J. E. B., “Jeb”) Stuart is firmly placed alongside Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson in the front rank of Confederate heroes. He seems to epitomize the lost cause—the bold young cavalry leader of the legendary Army of Northern Virginia who “died game” at the head of his troops. History has been kind to him, and his reputation has grown over the years.<sup>1</sup> But he has always had his critics, and even in his lifetime he was more than a little controversial. Some said he was more concerned with making flamboyant gestures and enhancing his personal reputation than with winning battles or advancing the cause of the South. His role in the Gettysburg campaign of June–July 1863, in particular, cast a shadow over his other accomplishments and has become the subject of countless books and articles.

The problem was that Stuart was not with the Army of Northern Virginia when it made its fateful march into Pennsylvania in mid-1863 and did not rejoin it until the second day of the battle at Gettysburg. Lee later wrote that the army had been “embarrassed” by the absence of the cavalry, stirring up a controversy that has never died. Lee’s statement is an indirect indictment of Stuart, for he *was* the cavalry. Why were Stuart and the cavalry absent? Did Stuart’s absence mean that he disobeyed Lee’s orders, or was Lee himself to blame because he gave faulty orders? Did Stuart’s absence really affect the outcome at Gettysburg? All these questions have been debated endlessly, and the literature itself is a battleground, highly partisan, built around selective quotations from the written record

and sympathetic interpretations that ignore inconvenient evidence, all full of high spirits and zealous advocacy.

Can anything new really be added to this century-old debate? The answer is yes, and this work takes a fresh look at the controversy. I briefly review the background, planning, and conduct of the campaign by both sides. Most of this contextual material is familiar, and my documentation is to the well-known or (*Official Record*), to firsthand accounts written by participants after the war, and to the standard secondary sources. I look once again at the relevant details of how events unfolded in the last week of June and the first few days of July 1863. I reexamine the famous orders from Lee to Stuart, and I also look at the best-known of the voluminous literature that has grown up around these communications, including some of the truly imaginative literary “deconstructions” that have been attempted.

The zealous advocacy of many of these previous authors has not always made for good historical detective work, and, remarkably enough, some important issues of context, timing, and geography have been all but overlooked in this extensive literature. Moreover, important new evidence and interpretations have emerged in recent works by Edwin Fishel, Stephen Sears, Joseph Harsh, and others that contribute to our reexamination of Stuart and Gettysburg.

I look also at Stuart’s role in the army, as he and Lee understood that role, before and after Gettysburg; at the cavalry’s assignment in the Gettysburg campaign as understood by all concerned; at Stuart’s actual conduct of his ride north; and at the effect of Stuart’s absence on the unfolding of the campaign and its final outcome from both the Northern and Southern points of view. I am able to solve some minor mysteries and clarify several apparent inconsistencies in previous historical interpretations.

This new look convinces me that what took place is actually very straightforward. Stuart did not, in fact, “disobey” the letter of his orders from Lee. Lee trusted Stuart and allowed him considerable discretion about the particulars of the move north, because that is

how he had always operated with Stuart and most of his other subordinates. This was Lee's mistake and perhaps the major flaw in his generalship.

There was, indeed, some grammatical confusion in the orders Lee issued to Stuart, but this really made no difference to the outcome. Stuart must have known what was expected of him, for he was to do what he always did when the army was on the move. But Stuart followed his own agenda and undertook an unauthorized raid on Washington rather than scouting and screening for the army as Lee had intended. Stuart must have been aware that he was going well beyond the real intent of his orders, but he hoped for a new triumph that would justify his actions. These mistakes, first by Lee and then by Stuart, were a major reason the battle of Gettysburg unfolded the way it did, with unfortunate results for the Confederate cause.

In short, Lee did not give precise, to-the-point orders and was wrong to trust Stuart, but Stuart knowingly stretched his orders to the limit, thereby abusing Lee's trust and abdicating his proper role as the army's chief of cavalry. Does this conclusion constitute an indictment of Lee or Stuart? Hardly. It simply reminds us that no military leader—Lee, Stuart, or Napoleon!—has ever been infallible. Misunderstandings, poorly written orders, and outright errors of judgment occur even on the part of great generals. This random element is part of the fascination of military history. Lee and Stuart will continue to be military models on the strength of their accomplishments before and after Gettysburg. But it is important for us to understand how their poor judgment contributed mightily to the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg, a defeat that was very important in the larger scheme of things.

No doubt the Lee-Stuart-Gettysburg controversy will continue. Stuart was and is an enormously attractive historical figure, and each generation produces new advocates to defend him. The tone is perhaps often a bit more shrill than need be, but this is how Stuart himself conducted his debates. On the other hand, one cannot

help but be struck that Lee recognized his mistake and blamed no one but himself, whereas Stuart, having abused Lee's trust, wrote a wildly inaccurate after-battle report that blamed everyone else in sight. His self-justifying report on the cavalry's role was twice as long as Lee's much more matter-of-fact report on the whole campaign. Perhaps it is just as well for his reputation that Stuart did not survive the war.

The judgment of many observers at the time was that with Stuart in his proper place the campaign would have developed differently and there might not have been a battle at Gettysburg at all. Lee could have fought and quite possibly won a battle on ground of his own choosing elsewhere. Furthermore, many observers at the time thought such a victory would have changed the outcome of the war. Many authors on Gettysburg have ignored the evidence that Lee (and Jefferson Davis) expected to win a military triumph in Pennsylvania and were sure such a victory would be so severe a psychological blow to the North's will to fight as to lead to a negotiated settlement. It seems clear that they planned the campaign to this end and had made preparations for the peace negotiations they hoped would cap the whole venture.

Obviously we cannot be sure this would have happened. Even if Lee had won a great victory in the campaign, the war might have dragged on. Much would have depended on how Lincoln as well as the Northern public reacted to a new defeat, and no one can know this. Students of these matters will continue to speculate about such imponderables as long as we study the Civil War. But understanding a bit more fully the magnitude of the Confederate failure at Gettysburg provides new fuel for this speculation.

A final note on historical accuracy is in order. Much of this re-examination—much of any historical reexamination—rests on the retrospective accounts contained in books and articles written by the surviving participants well after the events took place. One has no choice but to use such material, but it is distinctly uneven in accuracy. The “fog of war” continues long after the battles are over. It

is worth remembering the cautionary comment by one of the chief compilers of the *Official Record*.

The experience of this office has demonstrated the utter unreliability of recollections of the war. I have had a Union colonel apply for permission to retract a statement never made in his report on Balls Bluff. A general officer has complained that his report of Shiloh was garbled, but when shown his original report he acknowledged that it was correctly printed. Again, a Confederate major general denied ever having made a report that he saw noted in our catalogue, and on inspection it was found to be in his own handwriting and he so acknowledged. As another instance, I would mention that an attempt to ascertain who commanded a certain Confederate brigade in the Gettysburg campaign has developed two claimants for the position.<sup>2</sup>

Even with the most scrupulous effort at accuracy, uncertainty continues to exist. History remains one of the liberal arts, not one of the sciences.



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## Jeb Stuart and the Confederate Defeat at Gettysburg

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## 1. The Background to Gettysburg

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The battle of Gettysburg is still remembered as the high-water mark of the Confederacy. The defeat of Lee's army on the fields and hills of southern Pennsylvania in July 1863 ended the Confederacy's hopes for a military victory in the war. The Confederate invasion that led to Gettysburg has often been described as a raid by the South to gain short-run advantages. In fact, it resulted from a bold gamble by the Confederacy to win the war in a single smashing campaign. Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis thought the gamble was a fairly good one and expected to win in Pennsylvania. It also seems clear that for a long time Lee had wanted to fight such an all-or-nothing battle. Understanding this background makes the story of the Confederate defeat all the more interesting and Lee's poor conduct of the battle all the more intriguing. Why did Lee fumble what was to have been his master stroke?

### Lee's Strategic Vision

Robert E. Lee has been much criticized in the recent Civil War literature for being too aggressive and offensive-minded. According to these critics, his bold attacks and counterattacks were too costly and were the wrong strategy for a Confederacy that was poor in resources and manpower. This logic says that Lee should have maintained a completely defensive posture, holding his casualties to a minimum, and waited for the Union to grow tired of the war.

In sum, Lee and the Confederacy should have stalled and played for time, because time was on their side. This line of argument has been a major theme in the past two decades of Civil War studies. Looked at from this point of view, the whole Gettysburg campaign was a grave mistake.<sup>1</sup>

Such criticism of Lee (and implicitly of Jefferson Davis, who had to approve Lee's moves) is not so much of his generalship as of his strategic vision. The critics are saying Lee fought the wrong kind of war because he did not correctly understand the South's geopolitical situation. But it seems reasonable to assume that Lee understood the strategic situation of the Confederacy at least as well as his modern critics do. He frequently indicated that he knew all too well the limitations of the South's manpower and resources. Not long before the Gettysburg campaign, Lee wrote his well-known word of caution to Jefferson Davis: "We should not, therefore, conceal from ourselves that our resources in men are constantly diminishing, and the disproportion in this respect between us and our enemies, if they continue united in their efforts to subjugate us, is steadily augmenting."<sup>2</sup>

The criticism of Lee by Alan Nolan and others is essentially that limited manpower was the South's major weakness. Had Lee conserved his army, he and the South could have fought indefinitely. Shortages of armaments, equipment, and other supplies are dismissed by appeal to the Beringer-Hattaway-Jones-Still dictum: "No Confederate army lost a major engagement because of the lack of arms, munitions or other essential supplies."<sup>3</sup>

But this is much too simple a view of the Confederacy's economic and logistic situation. Perhaps Lee understood something his modern critics have lost sight of—that time was not really on the side of the South. The war was being fought in the South, with crippling effects on the Southern economy and society. Even in those parts of the South not directly affected by the fighting, times grew very hard as the war dragged on. Agricultural output fell, manufactured goods became scarce, and the standard of living fell drastically. That the

war had a devastating impact on the economy of the South is one of the few noncontroversial conclusions reached in Civil War studies.<sup>4</sup>

Union incursions and occupation of key points such as New Orleans and Nashville were part of the problem, but more fundamental was economic mismanagement by the Confederate government. The Confederacy financed the war by simply printing money, leading to hyperinflation and a profound disruption of the entire civilian economy. Jefferson Davis and his secretaries of treasury never gained real leverage over the Southern economy, and in the end they supplied the armies in the field by confiscating (“impressing”) needed supplies. The individual states bitterly opposed this policy and frequently sabotaged the central government’s efforts. The underlying economic and social structure of the South began to come apart at the seams, and the longer the war lasted, the worse the economic and political situation grew. Perhaps no Confederate army lost a battle for want of ammunition, but as the war dragged on it became more and more difficult for the South to maintain armies of any size in the field. Everything was in short supply, not just manpower, and declining civilian morale had its effect on the armies as well. The famous Richmond “bread riots” had occurred only a few weeks before the Gettysburg campaign began. Modern critics have largely ignored this background to military events, but Lee must have been acutely aware of it. Time was distinctly not on the side of the Confederacy.<sup>5</sup>

In short, Lee was convinced that the Confederacy could not wait out the Union. Time was running out, and he must defeat the Union army in the field. He had also concluded that he could not do this by fighting a totally defensive war. Whatever his underlying strategic views, Lee’s experience in the war seemed to teach this hard practical lesson. His great defensive victories in Virginia had brought the South no closer to its goal of winning Northern recognition of Southern independence. Even the defensive victories led to casualties, and the manpower and supply problem grew steadily worse. The Union army, on the other hand, continued to grow in

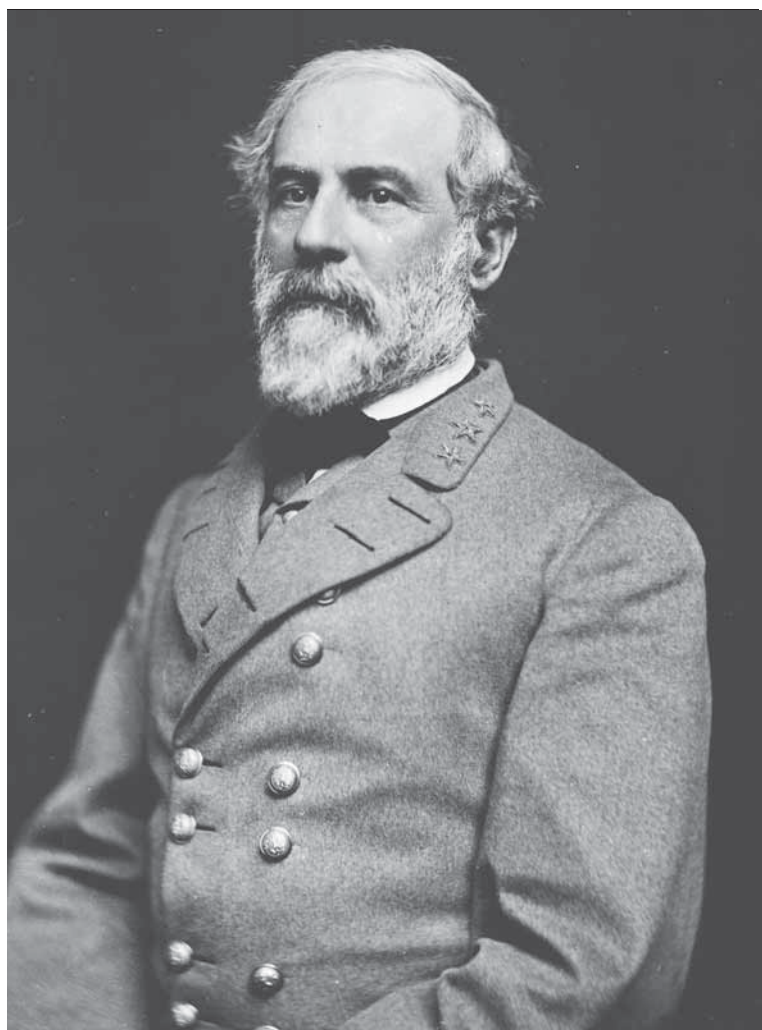


FIGURE 1. Gen. Robert E. Lee. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



FIGURE 2. Gen. Jeb Stuart. Stuart and Lee enjoyed a successful collaboration in many classic battles of the Army of Northern Virginia but are often cast as adversaries in the Gettysburg literature. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



numbers and to improve its organization, equipment, and logistics. The Northern economy was even prospering from the war.<sup>6</sup>

The war thus far showed clearly that, when defeated, the Union armies could retire to the “sanctuary” of the North to rest, regroup and reequip, then come again. Lincoln and the radical Northern leaders seemed relentless in their hostility. They would continue to raise new armies, find new generals, and grind away at the South. The Confederacy, in contrast, was running out of money and resources as well as space and manpower. Lee seems to have always understood these realities, and he wrote that if the war in Virginia continued indefinitely, it would end in a siege of Richmond. This, of course, is what did happen in the end.<sup>7</sup>

Lee’s first effort to take the offensive had ended badly at Antietam in 1862, but he never accepted this as a defeat, considering it only a setback due to bad luck (most notably, the famous lost order giving away his plans). He began planning a new northern incursion at once but had to postpone such plans when Union offensive moves in Virginia forced him to fight a series of brilliant defensive battles in the winter of 1862–63. After Chancellorsville, Joseph Hooker had been thrust firmly back on the defensive in central Virginia, and Lee could return to his offensive plans.

This, then, was undoubtedly Lee’s strategic vision before Gettysburg: time was running out for the South, and he must convincingly and finally defeat the Union army in the field. Doing this would permit him to make a real enough threat to Northern life and property to force Lincoln to abandon the war. And this must be sooner, not later.

Many in the South in 1863 did not share this strategic understanding, feeling instead that the South should concentrate on defending itself from the Northern invasions already under way. The greatest threat in mid-1863 appeared in the west, where Ulysses S. Grant was close to taking Vicksburg, thus cutting the Confederacy in two. Richmond was also perceived as being under a renewed threat from the Union enclaves on the coast of Virginia and North Carolina.

(John Hood and George Pickett's division from Lee's army had been detached to the latter theater before Chancellorsville.) This view proposed that a fraction of Lee's army be shifted to the western theater to relieve Vicksburg and drive Grant from the Mississippi. James A Seddon, the secretary of war, felt this way, and most of the Confederate cabinet probably inclined to the same view. But such a strategy was also essentially defensive. The best it could accomplish was to drive the Union out of the middle Confederacy and back into Kentucky and Missouri. This would be the western equivalent of chasing the Union army in Virginia back into Washington. But such a victory, however impressive tactically, would cost the South men and resources without doing serious damage to the North. The South would be no closer to a strategic victory.<sup>8</sup>

### **Seizing the Moment in 1863**

In May 1863 Lee must have felt that the moment was especially propitious for an offensive move against the North. He avidly read the Northern press and was keenly aware of the growing discontent with the war in many quarters in the North. The growing casualty lists were creating a backlash, and the recent adoption of military conscription was hugely unpopular. Two weeks before Gettysburg, the "peace party" in the North had held a gigantic rally in New York, with prominent politicians making speeches to a cheering crowd of thousands. All of this was well reported in the Northern press, and Lee certainly knew about it.<sup>9</sup>

The South could fan these flames of popular discontent by dramatically increasing the perceived cost of the war to the Northern people and bringing the harsh realities of war—invasion, destruction, and occupation—to the North itself. A great victory by the Army of Northern Virginia over the Union forces in a battle fought deep in the heart of the Union would reverberate throughout the North in a way that another victory in Virginia could not. It would strike a telling blow to Northern morale and will to fight, strengthen the "peace party" in the North, and put severe pressure on Lincoln

to negotiate a truce, if not a peace.<sup>10</sup> A successful invasion of the North culminating in a victory would also have a profound effect in England and France, where the South had many friends, and might yet lead to diplomatic recognition and even intervention.<sup>11</sup>

This was Lee's rationale for an offensive strategy and for the Gettysburg campaign. It is unlikely that he shared this bold, sweeping vision of the campaign with the Confederate cabinet. But he almost certainly shared it with his commander-in-chief Jefferson Davis.

### **Jefferson Davis's Offensive Inclinations**

In his various writings after the war Jefferson Davis never admitted to any offensive ideas or plans, and several generations of sympathetic historians accepted his denial. Joseph Harsh puts it very well: "Historians have accepted the official Confederate explanation—part propaganda, part self-rationalization and part genuine conviction—that Northern aggression forced war upon a country that only wanted to be independent and free from outside intervention."<sup>12</sup>

Harsh goes on to point out that the three clear objectives of the Confederacy—"independence, territorial integrity, and the union of all the slave states"—inevitably implied an expansion at least into those slaveholding border states (Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri) that had not initially joined in secession, as well as regaining western Virginia. Moreover, the South felt it "owned" the territory of the southwest, making up several potential new slave states. Southern politicians also believed in a slaveowners' "manifest destiny" that would take their new nation to the Pacific, into Mexico, and perhaps to the Caribbean as well. The South wanted to be "left in peace" in order to build a new slaveholding empire.<sup>13</sup>

This is consistent with the notion of a deliberate provocation of the conflict by radical Southern slaveholding expansionists, a stock-in-trade of Northern interpretations of the war for many years, which then fell from favor in the "binding up the wounds" period of Civil War historiography. Karl Marx, in the commentaries he

wrote on the war for the *New York Daily Tribune*,<sup>14</sup> argued that the only real “Confederates” were the quarter of a million large-scale slaveowning plantation oligarchs (and their families and retainers) who wanted to annex Mexico and Cuba but knew the Northern states of the Union would never allow this. Marx quotes experts of the day as claiming that soil depletion in the old states of the Deep South required new land in the west if the Southern economy was to maintain itself. This theory of the political and economic dynamics that led to the outbreak of hostilities was (and still is) anathema to Southern apologists, but some recent writers have returned to this thesis.<sup>15</sup>

Davis claimed to follow a “defensive-offensive” military strategy, but the reality is that he encouraged his generals to be as aggressive as they felt circumstances allowed. Most were not so minded, except for cavalry raids and guerrilla actions. But Davis had contemplated and even attempted invading the North on at least three occasions: first, just after Bull Run, when he urged Joseph E. Johnson and P. G. T. Beauregard to move on Washington, only to be stymied by Johnson’s timidity and his impossible demands for reinforcements and supplies; second, in 1862, when Braxton Bragg moved into Kentucky and Lee into Maryland for the first time, with both efforts ending in defeat owing to poor tactical management; and finally, in Lee’s Gettysburg campaign in 1863.<sup>16</sup>

Such a strategy would have been popular in the early days of the Confederacy, but as the Federal armies began to penetrate the South, a highly particularized defensive mind-set took over. Davis was forced by political pressures to pursue a “perimeter” defense. When substantial areas of the Deep South began to come under Union control, it became more and more difficult for the Confederacy to concentrate its forces for a real offensive. Demands that troops be everywhere at once, protecting everything became fierce and politically irresistible. Confederate generals in the west, reflecting local sentiment, frequently argued with or just ignored orders from Richmond aimed at concentrating forces that would have



FIGURE 3. R. E. Lee makes a point to Jefferson Davis and his cabinet. The meetings in May 1863 authorizing Lee to begin the Gettysburg campaign must have resembled this stylized scene. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

moved them from a given area and thereby increased the danger of a Union invasion. Truly, the South can be said to have “died of democracy.”<sup>17</sup>

The days after Chancellorsville marked the peak of Confederate fortunes in the east. Lee’s star was at its zenith, and he had developed an excellent working relationship with Davis, sending him almost daily reports and deferring to him on all matters. Davis trusted Lee, whereas he never fully trusted any of the commanders in the west.<sup>18</sup> Davis approved of Lee’s proposed move into the North and got the approval of his cabinet as well after lengthy discussions. As Michael Palmer points out, Davis and Lee won a “battle of Richmond” in the weeks before launching the Gettysburg campaign.<sup>19</sup>

Davis and Lee had to justify the intended Northern incursion as a diversion to draw Federal forces away from the siege of Vicksburg. They also pointed out that the army could gather supplies from the rich Maryland and Pennsylvania countryside, thus far untouched by the war. Both these arguments had some validity and were convincing to the cabinet, but the real reason for the move north was more

fundamental: the best way to relieve Vicksburg and the west was to win the war in the east.<sup>20</sup>

Davis also showed his larger intentions and hopes for the campaign by the highly unusual role in it he had designed for his vice president, Alexander Stephens. Davis and Stephens got along very badly, and Stephens spent most of the war on his farm in Georgia. But he alone among the Confederate top leaders knew Lincoln personally, having been his colleague and friend in Congress years before. Davis wanted Stephens to accompany Lee north so as to be on hand to negotiate with Lincoln should the "occasion" for talks arise. In the end, Stephens arrived in Richmond only after Lee had left Virginia, but he wrote to Lincoln proposing that they meet to discuss prisoner exchanges and other matters. Lincoln replied after Gettysburg, rejecting such talks. The whole episode is revealing of what was in Davis's mind when Lee started north, but it has been almost completely overlooked in the literature on Gettysburg.

Stephens had been pushing the idea of negotiations for some time, but he had very little influence on Davis. The initiative in 1863 did come from Stephens in the form of a letter that reached Davis the same day as a letter from Lee also urging that Confederate policy make an effort to capitalize on the growing peace movement in the North. Davis accepted Stephens's idea this time, since the moment seemed particularly propitious. However, Stephens was aghast to learn of the invasion of the North and accused Davis of "wanting peace only through the sword." He did not like having his peace feeler linked to Lee's armed invasion, and it is not clear that he would have accompanied Lee even had he arrived in Virginia in time.<sup>21</sup>

Davis also supported Lee's move north in the most tangible and practical way by giving him reinforcements, amounting to three brigades of infantry from North Carolina and two of cavalry from western and southeastern Virginia. Two divisions of Lee's army that had been on detached service in southeastern Virginia were also sent back north. These were risky moves (and strongly opposed by

D. H. Hill, the commander in Carolina), and they suggest that Davis understood Lee was making a maximum effort and needed all the forces he could get. Davis was also willing to gamble.

### **Lee's Tactical Plan for the Campaign**

In planning the campaign, Lee must have reasoned that if he succeeded in gaining a good head start on Hooker, he would be able to strongly influence, if not dictate, where and when the inevitable battle would take place. Lincoln could not allow a rebel army to ravage the heart of a great Northern state, and Hooker would certainly be ordered to pursue Lee and bring him to battle. Two possibilities would then present themselves.

First, Lee could choose a strong position and dig in, wait for Hooker to catch up with him, then force Hooker to do the attacking. The memory of Fredericksburg was fresh in everyone's mind, and this was the scenario favored by James Longstreet—strategic offense but tactical defense. Second, Lee could monitor Hooker's movements closely and, when the right moment came, catch him on the march and attack. Both scenarios promised battlefield victory if properly executed. But the Union army would probably survive the first, just as it had survived earlier defeats. Even in winning a stunning defensive victory in a set-piece battle such as Fredericksburg, the Confederates suffered casualties and found it difficult to leave their prepared defensive positions and launch the follow-up counterattack needed to truly rout the Federal army. Winning a defensive battle inside the North itself would be more impressive than winning another such battle in Virginia, but the final outcome might still be the same. So long as the Army of the Potomac survived as a fighting force, the South gained only a temporary respite.

The second scenario offered greater promise, the chance to catch the badly led Union army on a forced march through unfamiliar country and perhaps rout it totally. It could be the climatic battle that had eluded Lee in his other victories over the Union army. This scenario also offered greater risk, since it would involve him

in a great battle of maneuver, with cut-and-thrust deep in enemy territory.<sup>22</sup>

Obviously we cannot be sure which scenario he hoped to follow. Longstreet felt that Lee had “promised” to follow scenario one, but Lee later denied this, saying that no general, entering a campaign, could know what kind of battle he would have to fight.<sup>23</sup> This has the ring of truth, but there is evidence that Lee, all the same, did have a plan in mind. Conversations reported later by Gen. Isaac Trimble and Col. A. L. Long suggest he favored scenario two.<sup>24</sup> The headstrong, stubborn, and violent way Lee conducted Gettysburg, once battle was irrevocably joined, also suggests that he was seeking not just a victory but a climactic triumph.

It is also a significant clue to his thinking that, for almost the first time, he attempted to position his cavalry to attack the Union army if it was forced to fall back, clearly hopeful of turning a retreat into a rout. He wanted to fight a definitive battle with the Army of the Potomac, knock it out of action for weeks or months, and thus change the course of the war. His battle tactics would be consistent with this strategic objective—bold and aggressive, but also high-risk.

At the outset Lee hoped to keep Hooker guessing about his intentions. He intended for the main body of his army to slip away from the Union forces in central and northern Virginia and move rapidly up the Shenandoah Valley, leaving a strong force behind to hold the Union army in place on the Rappahannock. A bit later this force would follow the main body, and the whole army would move into Maryland, up the Cumberland Valley, and into south-central Pennsylvania. Shielded by his cavalry and keeping the mountains between himself and the main Union forces, Lee hoped to confuse Hooker about his intentions and gain a considerable head start on the march north. Lee also proposed to Davis that the Confederate high command create a fictitious new army at Culpeper in central Virginia by sending a few brigades from Richmond under the command of Beauregard or some other notable, thus appearing to pose another threat to Washington.<sup>25</sup> This ingenious idea seems to have



occurred to Lee after his own movement north was under way, and Davis never acted on it.

It seems evident that Lee had only a general idea of where he was going. Months earlier he had the cartographer Jedediah Hotchkiss prepare detailed maps of this route and of the areas around Harrisburg and Philadelphia, but beyond that he did not get into specific routes. The army would move fast and go farther north than ever before. The leading corps would aim for the banks of the Susquehanna, with the rest of the army closing up rapidly behind the van. By early July Lee would have his whole army massed deep in the North, threatening several major Northern cities. Obviously Lee did not intend to “conquer” any part of the North, but this was certainly a real “invasion,” not just a “raid” for supplies.

The army could live off the countryside, but Lee had ammunition for only one prolonged engagement, or at the most two, and his supply line was long and tenuous. Clearly his army would be at great risk, and this seems to be further support for thinking that Lee must have been seen a great possible gain to justify taking such an enormous risk.

Such, then, was the background leading up to the events of Gettysburg.

## 2. Opening Moves of the Campaign

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In early June 1863 the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia was entrenched on the southern side of the Rappahannock River in central Virginia, facing the Union Army of the Potomac camped on the northern bank, shielding Washington.<sup>1</sup> The Army of Northern Virginia was newly reorganized into three corps, now commanded by James Longstreet, Richard Ewell, and A. P. Hill, with the cavalry under Jeb Stuart. The army had been rejoined by the two divisions that had been on detached duty to southern Virginia some months earlier and had also received reinforcements from North Carolina and southern Virginia, amounting to three brigades of infantry and two of cavalry. The army had never been so strong; it now numbered thirty-seven brigades of infantry and seven of cavalry, compared with twenty-eight and four at Chancellorsville a few months earlier, making a total of some 75,000 men. The army had lost Gen. T. J. “Stonewall” Jackson, but it was supremely confident in its own abilities. It had grown used to success. Lee expressed his belief that the army could carry out any mission he set for it. As he said after Gettysburg, he thought his men were invincible.

Chancellorsville had been a remarkable triumph for Lee. Initially taken by surprise by Hooker’s flanking move, Lee had reacted with speed and audacity, completely outmaneuvering and outfighting his opponent. And this victory was achieved with nearly one-third of Lee’s army on detached duty elsewhere. Chancellorsville was per-

haps the Union's most bitter defeat since Bull Run, and it was the zenith of Lee's generalship. The initiative in Virginia was definitely with the South, and all observers, North and South, expected Lee to make the next move. By the end of the first week in June, Lee had gotten approval from Richmond for his proposed move north and was ready.

On June 9 Lee began moving his army from its encampments in the Fredericksburg-Culpeper area north and west toward the Shenandoah Valley. Ewell's corps (with divisions commanded by Jubal Early, Robert Rodes, and Edward Johnson) led the way, crossing into the valley at Front Royal on the tenth, taking the Union garrison at Winchester by surprise on June 13, and then crossing the Potomac at Williamsport on June 15. Longstreet's corps (with divisions commanded by John Hood, Lafayette McLaws, and George Pickett) moved a few days behind Ewell, marched by a different route up the valley and crossed into Maryland at Shepherdstown. A. P. Hill's corps (with divisions commanded by Harry Heth, R. H. Anderson, and Dorsey Pender) continued the Confederate presence at Fredericksburg until June 13, then also moved up the valley, crossing into Maryland at Shepherdstown on June 24. As events unfolded, Hill's corps "leapfrogged" some of Longstreet's because Lee retained two of the latter's divisions in the Shenandoah Valley to support Stuart's cavalry screen defending the gaps in the Blue Ridge against Federal cavalry intrusions. The last of Longstreet's corps crossed at Shepherdstown on the twenty-fifth, as did Lee himself. As this description makes clear, Lee's advance guard was many miles and days ahead of the rest of the army. During this period, the second and third weeks of June, Lee's army was stretched out over a hundred miles of road and countryside.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Union Army of the Potomac**

The Federal Army of the Potomac was still commanded by Gen. Joseph Hooker, the loser at Chancellorsville. Neither Lincoln nor his commander-in-chief Henry Halleck had much confidence in

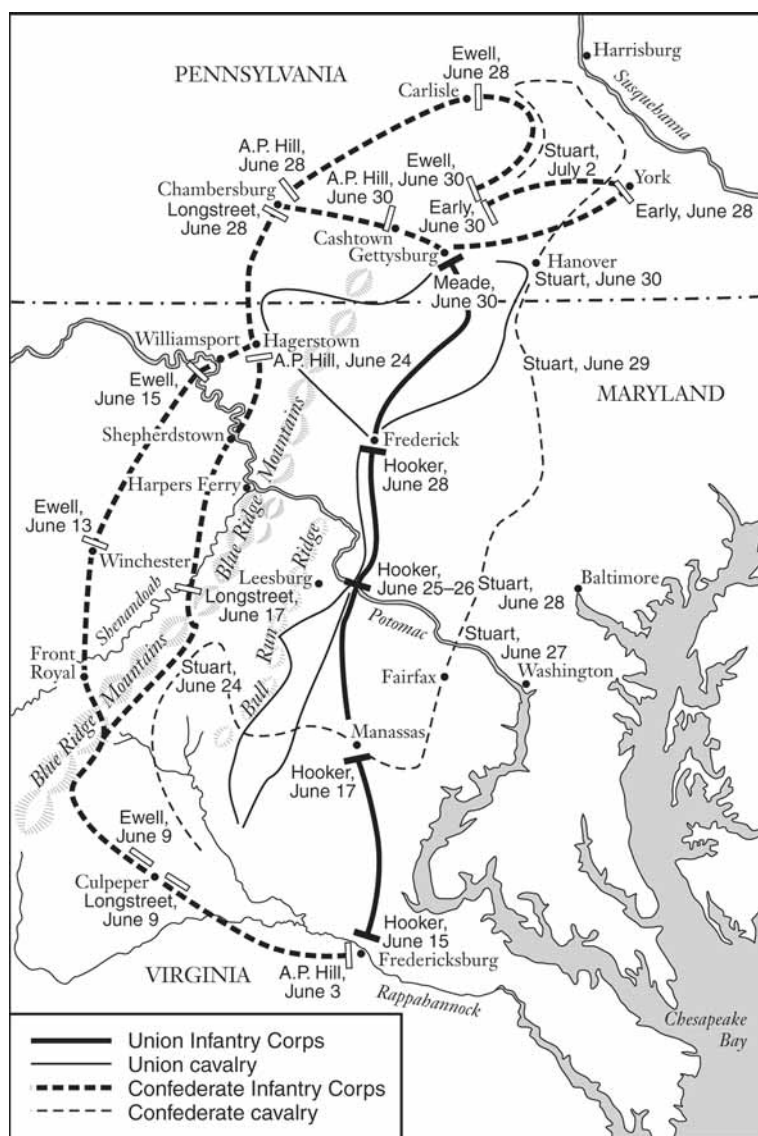
Hooker, but they hesitated to make another change in army leadership so soon. The army itself had been reorganized and reinforced after its defeat at Chancellorsville several months earlier. Although it had yet to win a major battle, it had matured into a strong, well-trained, well-equipped, and amply supplied field force eager to prove itself. It now counted seven infantry corps and three divisions of cavalry organized into a separate corps, plus artillery and accompanying trains—nearly 90,000 men in all—meaning it slightly outnumbered its Confederate foes. On the other hand, the rate of desertion had increased, and some 18,000 enlistments were expiring soon, so the number of “effectives” was uncertain. Both Hooker and Halleck worried about numbers, particularly since they still overestimated the size of Lee’s force.<sup>3</sup>

The army was positioned along the eastern side of the Rappahannock River, protecting the route from central Virginia to Washington. It was spread out over a substantial part of northern Virginia, with no corps closer than ten miles to any other corps. This distribution was for ease of foraging and movement, but also to guard against a surprise flanking movement by Lee.

### **Brandy Station and the Preliminary Sparring**

Lee intended to move his army up the Shenandoah Valley, west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, keeping the mountains between himself and Hooker. (Map 1 indicates the initial positions and the movements of the major Confederate and Union units over the course of the campaign. It should be referred to throughout this chapter.)

To keep Hooker guessing, Lee left A. P. Hill’s corps in place in Fredericksburg until Ewell’s corps, the van of the army, was approaching the Potomac ninety miles away. Lee hoped to mask his movement from Hooker with the mountains and with a screen of Stuart’s cavalry, but this was only partly successful. Hooker’s newly created intelligence network had alerted him to expect some move from Lee, and in early June he ordered his reorganized cavalry corps under Alfred Pleasonton to probe and discover what the Confeder-



MAP I. The Gettysburg campaign

ates were up to. Pleasanton was convinced that Stuart was gathering his strength for a large-scale raid in the direction of Washington and decided to preempt such a strike.

Actually, Stuart was gathering his forces for a grand review, to show off to Lee, the press, and politicians from Richmond. (It is possible, of course, that Stuart had in the back of his mind a raid after the review, but no hard evidence of this shows up in any of the historical records or recollections.) Stuart now commanded five brigades, nearly 10,000 riders in all, plus his own artillery, and he displayed them in a grand review complete with a mock cavalry charge. This became, in fact, two reviews, since at the last minute Lee could not make the first one planned and it had to be repeated a few days later. (Indeed, there were three reviews in all if one counts a smaller-scale three-brigade review in late May. This earlier review probably put the idea for a large-scale event into Stuart's head.)

Stuart clearly saw this as his shining moment, and he was in his glory. He and his staff all wore new uniforms, and lavish receptions and balls both preceded and followed the review. A description of the affair reads like historical fiction.

Promptly at eight o'clock on the morning of June 5, Stuart assembled his staff for the ride to Brandy Station where the review would take place. Buglers rode before the party and women and girls strewed their path with flowers . . . When Stuart and his escort reached the knoll that served as a reviewing stand, twenty guns from the Stuart Horse Artillery fired off their salute. A mile and a half of horsemen cheered . . . Stuart rode at a gallop up and down the ranks of his troopers . . . the artillery passed in review and the cavalry rode by at a fast walk . . . three bands played, while the horses pranced in time.<sup>4</sup>

Even more incredible is that most of this was repeated three days later for Lee's benefit.

The mood changed in a very few days, when Pleasanton suddenly launched his probing action. Early on the morning of June 9, ele-



FIGURE 4. Gen. Joseph Hooker showed off his newly reorganized Army of the Potomac to President Lincoln in a review, a few weeks before the Chancellorsville battle. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

ments of two Union cavalry divisions, five brigades amounting to nearly 10,000 men, streamed across the Rappahannock, drove in the Southern pickets, and attempted a dual envelopment of Stuart's headquarters at Fleetwood. The Federal attack was sharp and aggressive, but also poorly coordinated and piecemeal. Stuart was certainly taken by surprise and at first was disbelieving. But then he reacted with vigor, and his characteristic reckless personal leadership narrowly turned what threatened to be a disaster into a drawn battle. Historians of the four years of cavalry fights in Virginia all agree that Brandy Station was a turning point. Up to this battle, the Southern cavalry nearly always dominated its Northern opponents. After Brandy Station, it was a more than even fight, and over time the Union troopers slowly achieved their own dominance.<sup>5</sup>

The encounter was an embarrassment to Stuart, since it followed directly on the heels of his showy review for Lee. His official account of the battle denied that he had been surprised and called the fight a victory, but everyone in the army knew better.



FIGURE 5. The Union cavalry surprised and embarrassed Stuart in this fierce one-day fight at Brandy Station on June 9, 1863. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The Richmond newspapers were highly critical of Stuart's review and also of his showing in the Brandy Station fight. These were, of course, the same newspapers that had praised his earlier accomplishments. Some said outright that he would need a new victory to restore his luster. Stuart was understandably proud of his reputation, and although he denied it, such public criticisms certainly stung him badly.<sup>6</sup>

Brandy Station, Stuart's possible embarrassment, and his reaction have often been given a role in explaining Stuart's state of mind and his motivations in the early stages of the Gettysburg campaign. Some critics have maintained that all his actions in late June and early July must be understood as an effort to restore his lost reputation after Brandy Station. This may be going too far, but it is clear from his own account of the events centering on the march north in late June, after Brandy Station, that he keenly desired to "strike a blow"—in other words, to even his personal score with the Yankees, quite apart from the larger plans Lee had for the army.

In the days that followed Brandy Station, Pleasonton continued





FIGURE 6. At Aldie, on the Bull Run Ridge, on June 17, the Union cavalry pressed on Stuart's skirmish line protecting the rear of the Confederate army as it moved north up the Shenandoah Valley. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

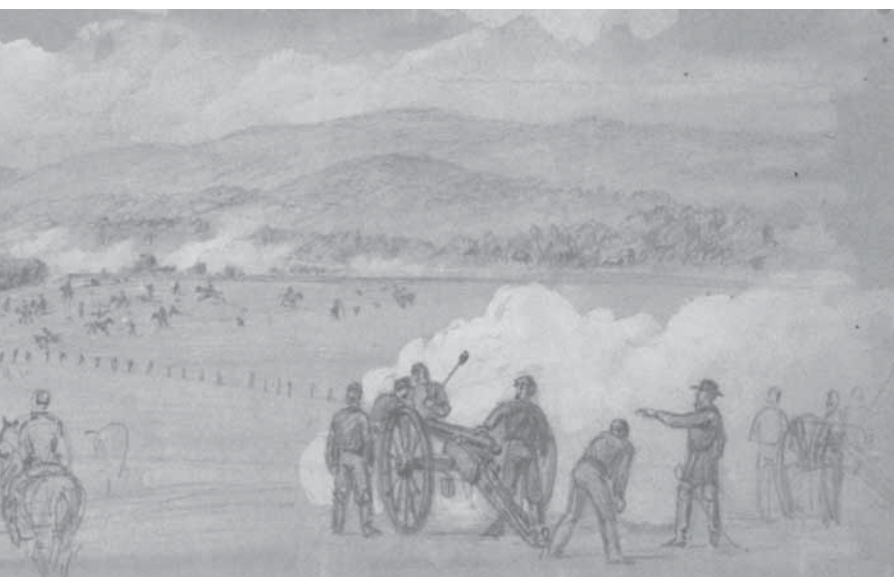


FIGURE 7. Stuart successfully shielded the Confederate move northward, but the cavalry skirmishing continued through a major action on June 22 at Upperville, near the Blue Ridge Mountains. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

to press Stuart and forced him back toward the Blue Ridge. Fierce, brigade-size actions occurred at Aldie-Middleburg on June 17–18 and at Upperville on June 21–22, with smaller actions nearly every day in between. Beginning with Brandy Station and ending with the last fight at Upperville, these cavalry fights went on almost daily for two weeks, starting near the Rappahannock and moving gradually westward across Loudon County to the passes in the Blue Ridge mountain range. Stuart narrowly held the Union cavalry in check, and Pleasonton's men failed to penetrate the Blue Ridge passes or threaten the train of Lee's army. But Lee was concerned enough about this Union pressure to slow the march north of two of Longstreet's infantry divisions, keeping them in position to support Stuart if this proved necessary. Moreover, the Union scouts did collect enough intelligence to confirm Hooker's previous intelligence that Lee was moving a large part of his army north up the valley.<sup>7</sup>

On June 21 the Union attacks abruptly ceased, and the cavalry left the Loudon Valley for the east side of the Bull Run Ridge. Stuart's main force, the five brigades with which he had been fighting his screening actions, advanced slightly toward the western edge of the smaller, more eastward of the two ridges around the Loudon Valley, Bull Run Mountain, and made camp around and to the north of Rector's Crossroads. His force was thus at the southern end of the Loudon Valley close to Bull Run Mountain, roughly halfway between the Potomac River on the north and the Bull Run River on the south. Both Lee and Longstreet had their camps within a few hours' ride, just on the other side of the Blue Ridge in the Shenandoah Valley. Stuart, with the main body of the cavalry, had become in effect the rear guard of the main army; this was awkward, for the proper station of the cavalry was in the van and on the flanks of the advancing army, and this is almost certainly where Lee wanted his cavalry on the march north.

Lee seems to have been unaware of the wear and tear two weeks of nearly constant action and movement had inflicted on Stuart's command. In fact, Stuart's horses and men were played out and in poor shape for a forced march north. By this point in the war the Union had established support logistics for supplying its cavalry with fodder, tack, and remounts, but the Confederacy never developed this capacity. This difference was a large part of the emerging Union superiority in this arm. Lee seemed unaware of this, and of course Stuart did not complain. Stuart had always been able to do what Lee asked of him, and it does not seem to have occurred to Lee (or Stuart) that this case might be different.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Confederate March North**

The route of the main body of the Southern army was straight up the Shenandoah Valley to the Potomac River, where it crossed in two columns by a pontoon bridge constructed at Shepherdstown and at the ford at Martinsburg. (See map 1.) Ewell's advance corps fought several brief skirmishes in the valley and forced the surren-

der of the division-size Union garrison at Winchester. The Confederates passed west of Harpers Ferry, which was occupied by a relatively strong Union force under Gen. Daniel Tyler (later replaced by Gen. William French). When the army had passed into Maryland in 1862, Lee had detached a force under Jackson that had successfully stormed Harpers Ferry, but this had meant dividing the army and nearly led to its defeat at Antietam. This time Lee ignored Harpers Ferry, detouring to the west. He probably reasoned that the garrison was too small a detachment to dare venturing out against even his rear guard. It has also been suggested that in bypassing Harpers Ferry Lee was trying to further confuse Hooker and Halleck about his intentions. They would not expect him to take the risk of moving his entire army north of the Potomac while leaving such a threat in its rear.<sup>9</sup>

The presence of the Union garrison there denied access to one of the best Potomac River crossings to the main army and also to Stuart. Stuart and the cavalry found their own way north after receiving orders from Lee on the twenty-second. (These orders and Stuart's subsequent movements will be discussed at length in a later chapter.) The entire Army of Northern Virginia, except for the cavalry, had crossed the Potomac by June 27.

### **Hooker Reacts to Lee's Moves**

Even though his cavalry had failed to break through Stuart's screening forces at the passes in the Blue Ridge, Hooker was aware that Lee's army was on the move, thanks to the activities of the newly formed Bureau of Military Intelligence, under the army's deputy provost marshal Col. George H. Sharpe. Sharpe had recruited and trained over a dozen groups of both military and civilian informants, who then penetrated the Confederate lines and sent back detailed reports of what they saw and heard.<sup>10</sup> Robert Milroy, the Union commander in Winchester and other outposts in Virginia, also sent him reports of the Confederate movements, but Hooker still did not know Lee's intentions. Lee might be launching a roundabout turn-

ing movement against the Union right flank, as he had at Chancellorsville, and to guard against this possibility Hooker moved some of his corps slightly to the north so as to “refuse” his right flank. Or Lee might be planning a raid on Maryland with part of his army while the rest stayed in place blocking the road to Richmond.

In any case, Hooker thought he saw an opportunity and proposed to attack the Confederate corps at Fredericksburg. Washington refused permission for such a move, and the exchange produced one of Lincoln’s more picturesque comments on tactics. Referring to Hooker’s plan to cross the Rappahannock, Lincoln said, “I would not take any risk of being entangled up on the river like an ox jumped half over the fence and liable to be torn by dogs in front and rear without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other.”<sup>11</sup>

A few days later Hooker proposed moving directly on Richmond, writing to Halleck that the Army of the Potomac should “with all the force I can muster, strike for his line of retreat in the direction of Richmond.”<sup>12</sup> Washington also turned this down, and again Lincoln managed a memorable phrase: “I think Lee’s army, and not Richmond, is your true objective point.”<sup>13</sup>

By June 22 all doubt about Lee’s movements had been removed. George Meade, then still a corps commander, learned from his scouts that both Longstreet and Lee were in Winchester moving north, and he so informed Hooker. This was further confirmed by a report on June 23 from the Union signal station at Harpers Ferry of a vast column of Confederates moving toward Hagerstown. These direct sightings confirmed the steady stream of reports from the undercover intelligence network that Colonel Sharpe’s bureau had developed. Hooker had learned of Lee’s reorganization of the Army of Northern Virginia within a matter of days, and he received reports as early as June 5 that Stuart was planning a major cavalry raid toward Washington. All during this early part of the campaign, Hooker was consistently well informed about his enemies’ whereabouts and movements. Lee’s efforts to shield his movements had accomplished much less than he hoped.<sup>14</sup>

Within the next few days it became clear to Hooker (and to Halleck in Washington) that the last Confederates had left Fredericksburg and that the main body of Lee's army had crossed the Potomac into Maryland. Lee's objective was still not clear, but it looked increasingly like a full-scale move by the Southern army into the North. Hooker demanded reinforcements and Halleck agreed, stripping the Washington garrison of two divisions of infantry and one of cavalry to send to him.<sup>15</sup> This left Washington with hardly enough troops to man its elaborate fortifications and made Lincoln even more nervous about the outcome of any new battle between Hooker and Lee.

When Hooker was finally convinced that Lee's entire army was moving north of the Potomac, he set his own army in motion into Maryland on June 25, indicating the Fredericktown-Emmitsburg area as the new central point of concentration. The operational plan was actually prepared by his chief of staff, Gen. Daniel Butterfield. Almost all his major units crossed by a double-span pontoon bridge that had been constructed at Edwards Ferry, some ten miles east of Leesburg. (One division of cavalry forded the river above the bridge.) The seven army corps, three accompanying cavalry divisions, and the artillery and supporting units making up the Army of the Potomac had all crossed by the twenty-eighth. The move was accomplished smoothly and quickly, reflecting credit on the staff organization and efficiency of the Army of the Potomac.<sup>16</sup>

### **Hooker's Offensive Plan**

Hooker seems to have been reluctant to give up the idea of an offensive move against Lee. The Harpers Ferry garrison, small though it was, did pose a threat of sorts to Lee's lines of communication and supply from Virginia. (This proved a very real threat later in the campaign, when elements of the small garrison left at Harpers Ferry attacked and destroyed Lee's pontoon bridge across the Potomac, creating a very awkward situation for Lee during his retreat from Gettysburg.) Hooker wanted to capitalize on this after crossing the Potomac on the twenty-fifth by moving at least part

of his army westward along the northern bank of the Potomac, to join with the Harpers Ferry garrison and strike at Lee's rear in the Cumberland Valley.

Hooker's thinking was evidently based on an excellent situation appraisal done for him by Gen. G. K. Warren, chief engineer of the army. Warren and Hooker appear to have discussed the notion of a move to Harpers Ferry, and Hooker asked for a memorandum on how this would work, which Warren then prepared and submitted on June 24:

General: In accordance with your request, I present the following reasons for moving our army at once to the neighborhood of Harpers Ferry (1) The whole of Lee's army is reported to be on the Potomac north of that place, part of it across the river, and threatening an advance upon Harrisburg. (2) There we can protect Washington as well and Baltimore better than here, and preserve our communications routes of supply. (3) It is the shortest line to reach Lee's army; will enable us to operate on his communications if he advances; to throw overwhelming forces on either portion of his army that he allows the river to divide; and is too strong a position for him to attack us in even if we make heavy detachments. (4) It will enable us to pass South Mountain without fighting for the passes, if we wish to move upon him and will thus destroy any advantage these mountains would give as a protection to his right flank. (5) It will prevent Lee from detaching a corps to invade Pennsylvania with, as it would then expose the rest of his army to our attack in superior force. (6) These opinions are based upon the idea that we are not to try and go around his army and drive it out of Maryland as we did last year, but to paralyze all its movements by threatening its flank and rear if it advances, and gain time to collect re-enforcements sufficient to render us the stronger army of the two, if we are not already so.<sup>17</sup>

Hooker never seems to have developed this note into a formal plan for such a movement, and he never discussed the rationale for

their movements with his corps commanders. Meade complained, "This is what Joe Hooker thinks profound sagacity—keeping his corps commanders, who are to execute his plans, in total ignorance of them."<sup>18</sup>

But Hooker actually began such a movement by the army toward Harpers Ferry by ordering the first corps (the Eleventh) across the river on June 25 into the area west of Frederick, in the valley between the Catoctins and South Mountain. He also routed the next two corps (the First and the Twelfth) to this same general area when they crossed the river a day later on the twenty-sixth. Julius Stahel's cavalry division (newly attached to the army from the Washington garrison) also crossed on the twenty-fifth, fording the river at Young's Island, marched to Frederick, and then took up positions at Crampton's Gap in South Mountain. This group of units was designated the advance "wing" of his army and placed under Gen. John Reynolds, the First Corps commander. Hooker said later that his intention was to use this "wing," joined by General French's troops from Harpers Ferry, as a force to throw across South Mountain onto Lee's rear.<sup>19</sup>

Hooker went in person to Harpers Ferry on June 26 "to see if it was feasible to begin a movement from his left."<sup>20</sup> These offensive designs toward the Cumberland Valley made Halleck (and Lincoln) nervous, and they raised objections to the plan, since it seemed to take the army away from a blocking position between the Confederates and Washington and put the capital at risk. Halleck was doing his best to provoke Hooker's resignation. As Stephen Ambrose points out, Halleck never seemed clear in his own mind about what he thought Hooker should do, but he objected to almost everything Hooker proposed.<sup>21</sup> In fact, he wanted Hooker gone.

In any case, Hooker showed his own ambivalence about the move west. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard, Eleventh Corps commander, noted:

This disposition of the enemy's leading corps, when reported to Hooker, puzzled him. This occasioned the singular multiplicity



and sudden change of orders. For example, on the 14th, the Eleventh Corps was first ordered to proceed to Sandy Hook, just below Harpers Ferry; next, before setting out, it was to cross the Potomac instead at Edwards Ferry, and report from that place to the headquarters of the army; next, to cross over there and push at once for Harpers Ferry. Soon after General Hooker directed me to go into camp on the right bank of the Potomac, and before that was fulfilled the orders were again changed to pass to the left bank of the river and guard the bridges. Surely somebody was nervous!<sup>22</sup>

Relations between Halleck and Hooker worsened under the pressure both men felt in the face of Lee's unexpected full-force invasion of the North. Hooker's biographer describes his state of mind: "When General Haupt asked where he intended to move, he replied that he would move nowhere unless he got orders to do so; then he would obey them literally and let the responsibility rest where it belonged. If the powers in Washington would not permit him to carry out his own plans, they must give the orders."<sup>23</sup> Still hoping to force acceptance of his plan, Hooker offered his resignation, and he was surprised when it was accepted and he was replaced by Meade.

Most accounts of the point at issue between Halleck and Hooker say it was Hooker's desire to evacuate Harpers Ferry and add that garrison to his army. This is true in the literal sense, but Hooker wanted to use French's force as part of the "wing" he intended to throw across Lee's line of communication in the Cumberland Valley, and Halleck considered this plan too bold and risky for Hooker to carry out. That appears to have been the real point at issue between Hooker and Halleck. A few days later Halleck readily agreed to Meade's withdrawing most of French's force from Harpers Ferry and using these units to guard the army's rear.

Hooker elaborated at some length on his plan to sever Lee's communications in his testimony before the Congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War.<sup>24</sup> Hooker stated that his order to

the Twelfth Corps on June 27 was his second effort to begin such a movement, and only his dismissal from command prevented a successful execution of the plan. He continued to place great emphasis on the need to join the Harpers Ferry garrison to this movement and reported that, had he been allowed to follow through, "I had a great deal of confidence that Lee's army would be thoroughly whipped, if I could not say destroyed."<sup>25</sup>

### Meade Assumes Command

Meade appears to have known nothing of Hooker's offensive plan, and the forward "wing" never penetrated in force into the Cumberland Valley or got closer to Lee's rear than the passes in South Mountain toward the northern end of the valley (see map 1). Meade wanted the army more tightly concentrated and pulled this forward wing east and north of its initial positions.

The tactical disposition of the various corps was excellent (the plan seems to have been prepared by General Butterfield, who had continued as chief of staff), far enough apart to avoid congestion on the roads, but close enough to provide support in case of a sudden fight. But they were essentially defensive dispositions. Meade was shadowing Lee, but he was not thinking offensively. Indeed, he started looking behind the army for likely places to make a defensive stand should Lee attack, and he settled on Pipe Creek, some twenty miles east of the designated rally point at Emmitsburg.

On June 28 he announced: "I propose to move this army tomorrow in the direction of York."<sup>26</sup> The Union army then moved northward, with two corps (the First and the Eleventh) moving through Emmitsburg, three other corps (the Second, Third, and Twelfth) moving toward Taneytown, some twenty miles to the east, and another two corps (the Fifth and Seventh) moving still farther to the east toward Manchester and Union Mills. The cavalry corps under Pleasanton now had three divisions. Gen. Judson Kilpatrick (who had replaced Stahel) moved from his original position with the advance "wing" on the left flank to a screening position on the right

front of the advance, while John Buford moved to screen on the left flank. David Gregg, with the Third Division, was to guard the rear of the army. Buford knew Lee's main body was well north of them and consequently scouted mostly in this direction. Gregg had to cross the army's line of supply and got entangled on the roads with the Sixth Corps, moving north from the Potomac. This proved important later, for when Meade became aware of Stuart's presence to the east of the army, he sent Gregg in pursuit. Thanks at least partly to the delay in getting clear of the army's train, Gregg ended up trailing a day behind Stuart but never catching up with him.<sup>27</sup> After the fighting in Gettysburg got under way, Gregg was given orders to rejoin the main army with most of his units, and he took part in the cavalry actions on July 2 and 3.

### **Setting the Final Stage for Gettysburg**

Thus did the two huge armies move north on roughly parallel courses, the Union army being behind and to the south and east of the Confederates. Hooker's intelligence was better than Lee had counted on, and the Union army moved more quickly than he had expected, so Lee had only a day or two head start on Hooker (later Meade). For a long time, the standard accounts of Gettysburg described the clash as an accidental battle, one both sides blundered into in ignorance of each other's exact location and strength. The two armies were portrayed as bumping into one another, with an initial accidental skirmish developing into an all-out battle as both sides poured in reinforcements.<sup>28</sup> Recent scholarship has made it clear that picture is incorrect. Thanks to the Union army's Bureau of Military Intelligence and its cavalry scouts, the Union commanders (Hooker and then Meade) had detailed, constantly updated information on the location of all the major components of Lee's army. They expected the battle to take place roughly when and where it did and made their dispositions accordingly.

Lee, however, was indeed totally ignorant of the rapid northward movement of the Union army and, worse still, operated for nearly

a week on the false premise that his enemy was still south of the Potomac. As late as the end of the first day at Gettysburg, Lee still did not know exactly whom he was fighting. How and why this situation could have arisen is the crucial question and leads us to Stuart and his role in the Gettysburg campaign.

### 3. Stuart, Lee, and the Role of the Cavalry

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The question of Stuart and Gettysburg has become, in much of the literature, a Stuart versus Lee debate. And this is a bit ironic, for neither man ever went on record with a harsh word against the other. In fact the two enjoyed a notably successful military collaboration for most of the war as well as a close personal relationship over an even longer time. This relationship is important in assessing the interaction between the two men in the hectic days just before Gettysburg. It also makes even more puzzling the breakdown of communications that evidently occurred in those crucial days.

Lee was, of course, much the older of the two and had been commandant of West Point when Stuart was a cadet there. West Point was a small place in those days, and the commandant typically got to know the cadets reasonably well. Moreover, Stuart had been a classmate and friend of Lee's own son Custis at the academy. Douglas Southall Freeman describes this relationship vividly: "The graduate whom Lee had come to know best, after his own son, was a stout, grey-eyed lad, of middle height with broad shoulders, abundant hair and a dashing manner, a boy born to be a cavalryman and already known by his three initials as 'Jeb' Stuart. He had visited the superintendent's home often."<sup>1</sup> Stuart himself wrote that the commandant's wife, Mrs. Robert E. Lee, "was like a mother to me,"<sup>2</sup> and he even courted one of Lee's daughters

for a time, though in the end he married another senior officer's daughter instead.<sup>3</sup>

Stuart graduated from West Point in 1854, and though he never served directly under Lee, they maintained their acquaintance over the next few years and must have followed one another's careers as both made their way in the Union army before 1861. Stuart served on the western frontier and was wounded fighting the Cheyenne Indians, while Lee was in Texas. Fate threw them together again in the brief expedition to capture John Brown and his band at Harpers Ferry in 1859. Stuart had been in Washington on personal business when news of Brown's raid reached the capital. Lee, the senior officer available to the Washington authorities, was given command of the company of marines sent to Harpers Ferry, and Stuart asked to accompany the expedition as his aide. Stuart played a leading role in subduing and capturing Brown and others.

After the war broke out, Stuart resigned his commission and joined the Confederacy. He was sent to the Shenandoah Valley, to serve first under T. J. Jackson and later under Joseph E. Johnston. After a brief period in the infantry, he was given a cavalry command, which became the First Virginia cavalry regiment. Stuart played an important role in the early movements in the valley leading up to Bull Run. Keeping Robert Patterson's Union forces on the defensive, Stuart skillfully screened the movement of Johnston's army out of the valley and their march to Manassas. At the battle of Bull Run his regiment made a furious charge in support of Jackson's famous "stonewall" stand, which helped turn the tide and led to the rout of the Union army. Stuart undertook the only real Confederate pursuit of the defeated Union army and led his scouts to the very banks of the Potomac just above Washington. After Bull Run Stuart commanded the Confederate picket line in northern Virginia, the so-called Alexandria line, and fought almost daily skirmishes. He was made a brigadier general in September 1861 and a major general a bit later when the army's cavalry became a division. Stuart fought in nearly all the actions of the Peninsula campaign, and when Lee took

command after Johnston was wounded, Stuart naturally became his chief of cavalry, serving in that capacity from then until his death in 1864. Stuart and his cavalry played a leading role in all the engagements of the Army of Northern Virginia from 1861 to 1864, for the most part a nearly unbroken series of victories.

Besides the difference in age, the two men were very different in temperament and personality. Lee was undemonstrative and quiet, while Stuart was gregarious and flamboyant. Lee preferred to let actions speak for themselves, but Stuart courted recognition and good notices. Lee undoubtedly was personally fond of Stuart and was reported to have wept when he heard of Stuart's death. But Lee's regard for Stuart went beyond personalities. He respected him as a skilled comrade in arms.

Almost from Lee's first day in command, Stuart had been a key element in the success of the Army of Northern Virginia, the scout Lee felt he could always depend on. Lee's sense of loss on behalf of the army was eloquently expressed in the special bulletin he issued on May 29, 1864, informing the army of Stuart's death at the battle of Yellow Tavern.

The Commanding General announces to the army with heartfelt sorrow the death of Major-General J. E. B. Stuart, late Commander of the cavalry corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. Among the gallant soldiers who have fallen in this war, General Stuart was second to none in valour, in zeal, in unflinching devotion to his country. His achievements form a conspicuous part of the history of this army, with which his name and services will be for ever associated. To military capacity of a high order, and all the noble virtues of the soldier, he added the brighter graces of a pure life, sustained by the Christian's faith and hope. The mysterious hand of an all-wise God has removed him from the scene of usefulness and fame. His grateful countrymen will mourn his loss and cherish his memory. To his comrades in arms he left the proud recollection of his deeds and the inspiring influence of his example.<sup>4</sup>

"Military capacity of a high order" was high praise coming from Lee, and Stuart must have earned this accolade in death with his actions in life. Lee's other well-known tribute was briefer but even more to the point: "He never brought me false information."<sup>5</sup> The full significance of this tribute has not always been appreciated. Lee was really saying, "Unlike many other cavalry generals, Stuart always supplied me with correct intelligence." Lee probably had in mind that many other famous Confederate cavalry leaders—most notably Nathan Bedford Forest, John Hunt Morgan, and Joseph Wheeler, who operated with the Army of Tennessee—while always excellent raiders, were not always reliable scouts.

Indeed, there appears to have been a fundamental difference in the role played by the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia and that played by the mounted arm of Confederate armies elsewhere. Wheeler's manual for cavalry operations, the textbook for Confederate cavalry leaders in the Deep South and the west, stressed deep penetration tactics and operations behind the enemy lines. These raids were often spectacularly successful, but from time to time their inaccurate reports had created tactical battlefield problems for Braxton Bragg and the other Southern army commanders.<sup>6</sup>

Stuart, in contrast, had become all that an army commander could want in his cavalry chief. Stuart's energy, his ceaseless activity, and his eye for enemy movements and intentions were remarkable. He scouted, skirmished, and fought tirelessly, accepting hardships in the field as a matter of course and expecting his men to do the same. He was always pressing the enemy to find out where they were and what they were doing, while at the same time screening the movements of his own army from enemy scouts. Even more important, perhaps, Stuart stayed in constant touch with Lee and his staff. Stuart was always there when he was needed.

The record is rich with examples of Stuart's prowess in his role. In the early battles around Richmond he guided Jackson's corps into position on the left flank and later led the attack that drove Gen. George McClellan back from the gates of the Confederate capital.<sup>7</sup>



In the days just before Second Manassas, Stuart raided the Union base camp in Centreville, capturing papers and orders that gave Lee a clear picture of Gen. John Pope's plan and allowed him to set the trap that gave him victory at Second Manassas. Lee's report on the battle made note of this and praised Stuart.<sup>8</sup>

Before Antietam Stuart, operating in advance of the army, raided Chambersburg but then moved east of the Catoclin Ridge to shield Lee's movements. He was able to warn Lee of the approaching Union army and impede McClellan's advance at the gaps through the Catoclin Ridge, giving Lee a vital day in which to reconcentrate his army.<sup>9</sup>

At Fredericksburg, Stuart brought Lee word that Gen. Ambrose Burnside was definitely going to attack across the river and then guarded the flanks of the defensive position Lee had chosen.<sup>10</sup> On this occasion Lee noted, "To the vigilance, boldness and energy of General Stuart and his cavalry is due chiefly the early and valuable information of the movements of the enemy." At Chancellorsville, Stuart was again deeply involved in the battle. It was he who discovered that Hooker had crossed the river and, later, that Hooker's right flank was "in the air," which intelligence led Lee to make his famous turning movement with Jackson. Stuart was present when Jackson was wounded and assumed temporary command of his corps. Lee once again was lavish in his praise for "the vigilance and energy for timely information of the enemy's movements before the battle and for impeding his march."<sup>11</sup>

When one reads the record and considers his entire career, it is clear that Stuart's great reputation as a cavalry soldier was fully merited. Still a young man, only a few years removed from having been a captain in the United States army, he had quickly mastered the art and craft of his chosen profession. Stuart surely had the instincts of a cavalryman, and he trained and molded an aggressive, tireless cavalry force for Lee's army in that same image. After Bull Run Stuart summed up his military philosophy to a group of new recruits: "Cavalry can trot away from anything and a gallop is a gait unbe-

coming a soldier unless he is going toward the enemy. Remember that. We gallop toward the enemy and trot away. Always." And "Be alert, always and everywhere, alert."<sup>12</sup>

Under Stuart, the Confederate cavalry came to "own" the territory between the two armies, wherever they might be. Lee always seemed to know what the Union forces were up to, whereas the Union commanders were constantly guessing about Lee's whereabouts and intentions. Stuart and his cavalry gave Lee an "informational superiority" perhaps analogous to modern-day air superiority.<sup>13</sup> Such were the fruits of Stuart's "military capacity of a high order."

Lee came to rely on—indeed probably to take for granted—this informational advantage. More strongly still, Freeman says, "Lee's strategy was built, in large part, on his . . . intelligence reports . . . facilitated more by Stuart and Stuart's scouts than by anything else."<sup>14</sup>

Stuart was courageous to the point of being foolhardy, telling one of his aides: "All I ask of fate is that I may be killed leading a cavalry charge."<sup>15</sup> That has a histrionic ring, but he courted such an end for several years, and this is in fact how he died. Stuart was a warrior who liked to fancy himself a "cavalier" or a knight-errant. This boldness and his rash personal bravery were part of his appeal to his troops and to the public, and they remain so today.

Understanding this facet of Stuart's personality gives insight into what might be called the "other" Jeb Stuart. For in addition to being a highly skilled general of cavalry, he was also a bold cavalier who enjoyed nothing so much as daring, risky ventures deep into enemy territory to confuse and terrify the foe while doing damage to enemy supply lines and communications. Such missions allowed Stuart to show his superiority over the Yankees and to display his own bravery and boldness. He was a superb horseman, well mounted, and he often outran his staff and even his own scouts. More than once he found himself alone among the enemy and escaped capture or death only by some heroic effort—leaping a high fence or bolting through encircling enemies. Stuart clearly enjoyed

these raids, these up-close and personal encounters, which were more like jousts than battles.

The most celebrated of Stuart's raids had been his famous "rides around" the Union army, in 1861 and 1862. These exploits were particularly popular with the Southern populace, for they seemed to demonstrate vividly the enemy's ineptness. The first such raid took place in June 1861 at the outset of the Seven Days battles in the Peninsula campaign. Lee wanted to know the location of McClellan's various units and sent Stuart to find out. This was Stuart's first major assignment for Lee, so Lee's orders were detailed, precise, and also cautionary. As Freeman tells the story:

Stuart was ushered into the office of General Lee . . . and told of the design for an offensive north of the Chichahominy and of the importance of ascertaining how far the enemy's outposts extended on the ridge . . . The next day, June 11, a courier handed Stuart his instructions in Lee's autograph . . . "You will return as soon as the object of your mission is accomplished, and you must bear constantly in mind, while endeavoring to execute the general purpose of your mission, not to hazard unnecessarily your command or to attempt what your judgment may not approve; but be content to accomplish all the good you can without feeling it necessary to obtain all that might be desired. You must leave sufficient cavalry here for the service of the army and remember that one of the chief objects of your expedition is to gain intelligence for the guidance of future operations."<sup>16</sup>

Stuart evidently suggested to Lee that it might be easier for him to make a circuit around McClellan and return on the opposite flank. Lee considered this dangerous but did not explicitly forbid such a route. There was, in fact, no order given pertaining to the specific route to be followed. The raid as executed involved Stuart's covering one hundred miles in three days' absence from the main army. He did considerable damage to Union communications and supply lines and brought back word of McClellan's division of his

army into two disjointed wings, leading to Lee's decision to attack the enemy's right wing. Thanks to this move, the South just missed a smashing victory in the opening round of the series of battles that followed. Lee gave Stuart's reconnaissance full credit for creating this opportunity.<sup>17</sup>

The second such ride around the enemy was in October 1862 and also originated with the army commander's desire to gain intelligence about the enemy's locations. Once again his orders to Stuart left much to his discretion but were cautionary in tone: "Reliance is placed on your skill and judgment in the successful execution of this plan, and it is not intended or desired that you should jeopardize the safety of your command, or go further than your good judgment and prudence may dictate . . . Should you be led so far east as to make it better, in your opinion, to continue around to the Potomac, you will have to cross the river in the vicinity of Leesburg."<sup>18</sup>

Lee clearly understood that Stuart would be out of touch for several days and might "ride around" McClellan, but he did not indicate the exact route he was to travel. He left that up to Stuart, trusting that he would make the right decision given his understanding of his larger mission.

These raids and Stuart's personal bravery were described in glowing newspaper accounts and brought Stuart much renown with the Southern populace. It is an understatement to say that they captured the popular imagination. By the end of the first year of the war he was already famous on both sides of the line, and his fame grew steadily. He reveled in this fame and reputation.

### **Stuart's Exploits and Reputation**

Both Jeb Stuarts—the general and the cavalier—combined in a striking physical presence and an enormously attractive personality. One of his contemporaries in the army later described Stuart: "He was now in the full flush of youth and early manhood, being scarcely thirty years of age. He was a splendid horseman and possessed a superb vitality. His courage was conspicuous and the

appearance of his black plume, always in the thickest of the fight, made him the idol of his troopers.”<sup>19</sup>

One of his enemies described him in equally glowing terms:

J. E. B. Stuart was cut out for a cavalry leader. In perfect health, but thirty-two years of age, full of vigor and enterprise, with the usual ideas imbibed in Virginia concerning state supremacy, Christian in thought and temperate by habit, no man could ride faster, endure more hardships, make a livelier charge or be more hearty and cheerful while so engaged. A touch of vanity, which invited the smiles and applause of the fair maidens of Virginia, but added to the zest and ardor of Stuart’s parades and achievements.<sup>20</sup>

Stuart’s accomplishments created his legend, but he added to it with his colorful dress, his lifestyle, and his entourage. He wore a large ostrich plume in his hat, a great cape with red lining, and knee-high boots with gold spurs. He sometimes signed his letters with the initials “K.G.S.” after his name, which stood for “knight of the golden spur,” since he did in fact wear golden spurs sent him by a female admirer. His staff included a cluster of foreign observers, and their reports built him an international reputation. Ladies sent him gifts and asked for his autograph or a lock of his hair, and the Richmond newspapers covered his every movement.<sup>21</sup>

Whenever his headquarters camped longer than overnight, he drew a crowd of admirers, particularly the young ladies of the neighborhood, and often there were parties and even impromptu balls so Stuart and his staff officers could enjoy dancing with the local belles. “There was always music. [Sam] Sweeny on the banjo, Mulatto Bob on the bones, a couple of fiddlers, Negro singers and dancers, the ventriloquist, and others who caught Stuart’s eye . . . Stuart often sang and Sweeny plucked the strings behind him.”<sup>22</sup>

And Stuart, a happily married man who evidently was genuinely fond of his wife, nevertheless loved the company of pretty young women. He found time to take local belles riding, to dine and dance with them, and even occasionally to write them poems. Was this all

innocent? His aide William W. Blackford swore it was: "Though he dearly loved to kiss a pretty girl, and the pretty girls loved to kiss him, he was as pure as they . . . I know this to be true for it would have been impossible for it to have been otherwise and I not know it."<sup>23</sup>

Stuart developed a fondness for reviews and parades of his troops—to accustom them to riding together in large formations, he explained. But such exercises also provided a stirring spectacle for him and his admirers. Stuart clearly aimed to enjoy his war—to do his duty, but also to play the role of the dashing cavalry hero to the fullest and savor every minute.

Early in his meteoric career, Stuart began to display a great sensitivity to criticism, even the implied criticism of insufficient praise and recognition for his triumphs. Although he denied it, he read the Richmond newspapers avidly and took their comments very seriously. His own after-battle reports were generous to his subordinates, florid in style, and often wildly inaccurate and self-serving. Edward Longacre, with respect to Stuart's report on one minor encounter, puts it very well: "Stuart had a high regard for honesty, at least as an abstract principle. But, while he would have hesitated to tell an outright lie, he was not above using guile to mask a less than sterling performance in the field. His report of the Dranesville fight stands as a model of evasion and special pleading, with inconsistencies and implausibilities cloaked in prose of the deepest purple."<sup>24</sup> In short, Stuart had become a media celebrity, and like most celebrities of any age, he enjoyed a love-hate relationship with the media and guarded his public image jealously. When he came in for severe criticism in the Richmond press for Brandy Station, Stuart saw to it that his side of the story was presented in a letter on the battle by an anonymous staff officer ("Veritas") sent to the *Richmond Examiner*.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Special Role of Mosby**

John Singleton Mosby was Stuart's favorite scout and played a key role in the events that unfolded before Gettysburg, so he must be



FIGURE 8. John Singleton Mosby, Stuart's favorite scout, was a regular CSA officer but operated much of the time as a spy and guerrilla. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

added to the picture being sketched. Mosby joined the Virginia cavalry when the war began and served as a junior officer under Stuart at Bull Run and the Peninsula. Stuart became aware of Mosby's special skills as a scout and used him to find the route for the Chickahominy raid (the first ride around the Union army) in 1861.<sup>26</sup>

This raid established Stuart's reputation with Lee and the public, and Stuart never forgot that he owed some of this success to Mosby. Stuart recognized Mosby's unique gifts as a scout and let him establish his own regular unit, the Forty-third Battalion of Virginia cavalry, which had *carte blanche* to operate as a guerrilla unit behind the Union lines, collecting intelligence and disrupting their logistics and supply lines. Mosby himself also quickly became famous to friend and foe alike. But as Mosby often said frankly, were it not for Stuart, he would have remained an obscure junior officer in the cavalry. Mosby came to idealize Stuart and even began copying his style and dress, complete to the plume in his hat. Stuart obviously admired Mosby's daring and his bold raids, which reflected further credit on Mosby's commander, Stuart himself. From time to time Lee was uneasy about Mosby's activities, but Stuart defended him and frequently mentioned him favorably in his reports. Mosby became Stuart's right arm as a scout, staying in frequent touch and providing him with a steady flow of intelligence about Union troop locations, movements, and intentions.

But Mosby was more famous still as a raider, a "partisan ranger," who operated behind the Union lines and skirted the distinction between being a scout and being a spy. Many of his men were clearly guerrillas who faded back into the civilian population between fights, and Union commanders considered Mosby and his men the 1860s version of terrorists. Stuart must have listened to many of Mosby's accounts of his exploits—such as capturing a Union general in his bed—and probably secretly envied him. Perhaps in that day, all cavalry officers had a bit of a wild streak; Mosby was Stuart's alter ego, his wild streak.<sup>27</sup>



### **Lee's Interaction with Stuart**

Before Gettysburg the two Stuarts—Stuart the cavalry general and Stuart the raider—seemed compatible with one another. Stuart had his occasional raid but never allowed the delight of tearing up the rear of the enemy army to interfere with his primary mission of scouting for and shielding the Army of Northern Virginia.

Lee, who knew Stuart so well, probably was aware of the playful, reckless strain in the man's makeup. Stuart and his men sometimes seemed to derive greater satisfaction from chasing Yankee generals from their beds and feasting on Union army delicacies than from beating the Union cavalymen in the field. But even if so, this caused no harm. All of Stuart's raids before Gettysburg were legitimate intelligence-gathering operations, taking him out of touch with Lee for no more than a few days. Lee and Stuart seem to have had an unspoken understanding: as long as Stuart did his job of scouting and shielding when and where Lee needed him, he was allowed to add the occasional flamboyant touch to his missions. In his descriptions of all the battles of the army before Gettysburg, Lee offered nothing but compliments on the role of the cavalry.

In short, Lee had come to believe he could count on Stuart. He based all his movements and battlefield decisions on the information Stuart supplied. Stuart and the cavalry were an indispensable part of the Army of Northern Virginia. Stuart knew what was expected of him. He understood that he had gained Lee's trust and that he had considerable discretion in his day-to-day movements in furtherance of his role. But he knew what that role was. In many critical situations, Stuart almost instinctively did the right thing even without explicit orders, his conduct at Chancellorsville after Jackson was wounded being an outstanding example. Stuart knew his job, and Lee knew that he knew it.

So one must conclude that in June 1863, when Lee and Stuart were exchanging brief, hurried communications about what was to happen in the next few days as the army moved north, both could draw on a stock of experience about the way they had worked to-

gether in the many battles of the previous two years. Stuart and the cavalry were Lee's eyes and ears and had always fought as an integral part of the army. Even with no orders at all, when the army moved north, Stuart would have known that his place was between Lee and the enemy's main force, scouting and screening, supplying Lee with constant updates on what the Yankees were up to, just as he had been doing for the previous two years. As a professional cavalryman, he would also have understood that this function was particularly important for an army on a flanking march around a strong enemy.

Although this point is obvious, it is important to make it because some of the most ingenious scholarship on the Stuart-Lee-Gettysburg issue has been devoted to parsing the Lee orders of June 22 and 23 as if they were rune stones or Delphic pronouncements. Such exegeses present a picture of Stuart receiving his written orders, puzzling over them line by line, but treating them as absolute, if obscure, not to be questioned even if understood only dimly. They suggest that Stuart had only his orders to tell him what Lee wanted him to do as the army moved north, and that Lee intended Stuart to follow the orders to the letter, neither more nor less. But this cannot be an accurate picture of the state of mind of either man.

Stuart knew what the cavalry's role was in Lee's army, for he had been filling it wonderfully well for two years. If Lee had sent Stuart a message simply saying, "We are moving North into Maryland up the Cumberland Valley toward Harrisburg; take the appropriate steps to scout for and screen the army," that would have been enough. Indeed, Lee's first message on June 22 comes close to saying just that. A second order, the next day, complicated matters a bit, but most of the real complications have come from the complex interpretations and subtle commentaries on these terse, hastily written field orders by modern authors who find strategic uncertainty in poor choice of words and tactical error in imperfect grammar.

A problem did lurk below the surface with Stuart in late June 1863. As the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia prepared to

move north, the two Jeb Stuarts were in conflict with one another. Stuart the cavalry commander certainly knew what Lee expected of him; but Stuart the bold cavalier had a different agenda. He needed, as Emory Thomas has put it, “to confirm his vision of himself.”<sup>28</sup> And a whole host of unforeseen consequences followed from this need and the actions it provoked.

## 4. Lee's Orders before Gettysburg

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Lee did not personally direct his battles. He used speed of movement by his army to surprise his enemies and put them in a disadvantageous position, gave his subordinate commanders general instructions, and then largely left the execution of the plan to them. This was Lee's style of command from his very first battle in the Civil War at Cheat Mountain, in western Virginia. Lee lost this first major action to McClellan, and a detailed critique of his conduct of the battle has noted "his habit of issuing broad orders and leaving details to subordinates."<sup>1</sup> In short, Lee was a relatively passive army commander-in-chief.

This early Lee also displayed patience and understanding when his subordinates failed to execute plans properly: "He was not ready to criticize the actions of his subordinates . . . Lee tended to treat his subordinates' failure kindly."<sup>2</sup> Both these traits stayed with him throughout the war and should be kept in mind in considering how Lee conducted the battle of Gettysburg and also how he reacted afterward.

### Events Begin to Unfold

By the end of the third week in June Lee had most of his army across the Potomac, and its advance guard was deep into Maryland. Stuart and the cavalry had been pinned down in Virginia defending Lee's rear from Union cavalry, but these fights had finally ended. The tempo of the campaign was accelerating, but so far Lee must

have felt he was on schedule. Early on June 22, Lee wrote to Gen. Richard Ewell:

Your letter of 6 p.m. yesterday has been received. If you are ready to move, you can do so. I think your best course will be toward the Susquehanna, taking the routes of Emmitsburg, Chambersburg and McConnellsburg. Your trains must be, so far as possible, kept on the center route. You must get command of your cavalry [Gen. Albert Jenkins's brigade plus two smaller independent units that were accompanying Ewell] and use it for gathering supplies, obtaining information and guarding your flanks. If necessary send a staff officer to remain with Gen. Jenkins. It will depend upon the quantity of supplies obtained in that country whether the rest of the army can follow. There may be enough for your command but none for the others. Every exertion should, therefore, be made to locate and secure them. Beef we can drive with us, but bread we cannot carry and must secure it in the country.

I sent you copies of a general order on this subject, which I think is based on rectitude and sound policy and the spirit of which I wish to see you enforce in your command. I am much gratified by the success which has attended your movements and feel assured that, if they are conducted with the same energy and circumspection, it will continue. Your progress will, of course, depend upon the development of circumstances. If Harrisburg comes within your means, capture it. General A. P. Hill arrived yesterday in the vicinity of Berryville. I shall move him on today, if possible. Saturday Longstreet withdrew from the Blue Ridge. Yesterday the enemy pressed our cavalry so hard with cavalry and infantry on the Upperville Road that McLaw's division had to be sent back to hold Ashby's Gap [in the Blue Ridge]. I have not heard from there this morning. General Stuart could not ascertain whether it was intended as a real advance toward the Valley or to ascertain our position.

The pontoons will reach Martinsburg today and will be laid at

the point you suggest, 4 or 5 miles below Williamsport, if found suitable. I have not countermanded your order withdrawing the cavalry [Jenkins's brigade] from Charlestown. I will write you again if I receive information affecting your movements.<sup>3</sup>

### **Lee's First Order to Stuart**

Later that same day, June 22, Lee wrote to Stuart:

I have just received your note of 7:45 to General Longstreet. I judge the efforts of the enemy yesterday were to arrest our progress and ascertain our whereabouts. Perhaps he is satisfied. Do you know where he is and what he is doing? I fear he will steal a march on us and get across the Potomac before we are aware. If you find that he is moving northward and that two brigades can guard the Blue Ridge and take care of your rear, you can move with the other three into Maryland, and take position on General Ewell's right, place yourself in communication with him, guard his flank, keep him informed of the enemy's movements, and collect all the supplies you can for the use of the army. One column of General Ewell's army will probably move towards the Susquehanna by the Emmitsburg route; another by the Chambersburg. Accounts from him last night state that there were no enemy north of Frederick. A cavalry force (about 100) guarded the Monacacy bridge which was barricaded. You will, of course, take charge of Jenkins brigade and give him necessary instructions. All supplies taken in Maryland must be by authorized staff officers for their respective departments, and by no one else. They will be paid for, or receipts given to the owners. I will send you a general order on this subject which I wish you to see is strictly complied with.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Drafting of the Orders**

Most of Lee's orders were actually drafted by his aide-de-camp, Col. Charles Marshall. Since these orders and Marshall's later account of their writing are important to my analysis, it is worth quot-

ing Thomas Connelly's excellent picture of Marshall's role in Lee's headquarters.

The headquarters staff was a closely knit cadre of young men who were in daily contact with Lee. It generally consisted of a military secretary, four aides-de-camp, and an assistant adjutant general. (Col. Marshall served in all these capacities before the end of the war.) Several of these became strong Lee partisans. They were young, impressionable men, most of them with literary talent, placed in close proximity to a man whom they came to love fiercely. Three of these—Colonels Charles Marshall, Walter Taylor and Charles Venable—remained with Lee until the end of the war. The fourth, Lee's secretary Colonel A. L. Long, later became an artillery officer.

Continuing:

Marshall, only thirty-two when he joined the staff, possessed literary abilities, which Lee had recognized. A former college professor and a Baltimore attorney, Marshall served as Lee's aide from the Spring of 1862. From then until Appomattox, Marshall had a special role on Lee's staff. He wrote official reports of campaigns, most of Lee's correspondence to President Davis, and messages to the War Department. And it was Marshall who examined all reports sent to headquarters by Lee's subordinates. Marshall came as close as any officer to being Lee's confidant and he forgot little.<sup>5</sup>

Marshall also wrote most of the orders issued by Lee's headquarters, either taking the wording directly from Lee's oral pronouncements or rendering into prose what he understood to be Lee's wishes based on their conversations.

We have Marshall's own account of the writing of this order on June 22, 1863, as contained in his memoirs, which he undertook in an effort to fill in the void left by Lee's failure to complete his own memoirs. In fact Marshall also died before finishing the work, but it was finally edited to completion by Gen. Sir Frederick Maurice and

published later still, in 1927. Not surprisingly, Marshall remembered the events leading up to Gettysburg very well.

General Lee explained to me that he had had a conversation with General Stuart when he left him near Paris, and that his own view was to leave some cavalry in Snicker's and Ashby's Gaps [in the Blue Ridge] to watch the army of General Hooker, and to take the main body of the cavalry with General Stuart to accompany the army into Pennsylvania . . . General Lee added that Stuart suggested that he could move down with his cavalry near Hooker, and annoy him if he attempted to cross the river, and when he found he was crossing he could rejoin the army in good time. General Lee said that General Longstreet thought well of the suggestion and had assented, but he added that, as soon as he found that General Hooker was crossing the Potomac, he must immediately cross himself and take his place on our right flank as we moved north.

Marshall is evidently describing a meeting of Lee, Longstreet, and Stuart on June 21 or 22. At that point Longstreet's headquarters was in Paris and Stuart's was at Rector's Crossroads, only some ten miles away. Lee was camped near Berryville, some ten miles north and west of Longstreet. So it is highly likely that all three met and conversed in person in addition to the written orders and communications that flowed among them. Continuing Marshall's account:

General Lee then told me that he was anxious that there be no misunderstanding on General Stuart's part, and that there should be no delay in his joining us as soon as General Hooker had crossed. He then said that in reflecting on the subject, while it had occurred to him that it might be possible for General Stuart, when the time came for him to cross the river, to cross east of the Blue Ridge and above General Hooker, thus avoiding the delay of returning through Snicker's or Ashby's Gap and crossing above Harpers Ferry, yet he added that circumstances might prevent Stuart from



crossing east of the Blue Ridge. He said he desired to impress upon General Stuart the importance of rejoining the army with the least possible delay as soon as General Hooker had crossed, and he then directed me to write to General Stuart expressing these views.<sup>6</sup>

Thus Lee and Stuart had talked about the coming campaign at length, and Stuart understood Lee's larger intentions for the army and knew that the main body of the cavalry was to move promptly across the Potomac on the army's right flank, whether Hooker was moving or not. If Hooker was moving, Stuart could attempt to delay and confuse him by moving on the east side of the Blue Ridge, in front of Hooker's probable route. The order drafted by Marshall on June 22, but read and approved by Lee, was intended to confirm this understanding. This plan makes excellent military sense, then and now, and is what one would expect Lee to attempt. It assigns Stuart the same vital role he been playing in the earlier campaigns.

### **Lee's Orders to His Other Generals**

Later that same day (3:30 p.m.) Lee wrote Ewell again:

I have received your letter of this morning from opposite Shepherdstown. Mine of today, authorizing you to move toward the Susquehanna, I hope has reached you ere this. After dispatching my letter, learning that the enemy has not renewed his attempts of yesterday to break through the Blue Ridge, I directed Gen. R. H. Anderson's division to commence its march toward Shepherdstown. [Anderson, along with McLaws, had been delayed to provide support if needed for Stuart's defense of the Blue Ridge gaps.] It will reach there tomorrow. I also directed Gen. Stuart, should the enemy have so far retired from his front as to permit of the departure of a portion of his cavalry, to march with three of his brigades across the Potomac and place himself on your right and in communication with you, keep you advised of the movements of the enemy, and assist in the collection of supplies for the army. I have not heard from him since. I also directed Imboden, if

opportunity afforded, to cross the Potomac and perform the same offices on your left. I shall endeavor to get Gen. Early's regiments to him as soon as possible. I do not know what has become of the regiments of the Maryland line. I had intended them to guard Winchester.<sup>7</sup>

Lee wrote also to Longstreet on the afternoon of June 22, telling him of the instructions that had been given to Ewell and Stuart. (Lee's order to Stuart was sent through Longstreet.) Longstreet replied at 7:30 p.m. on June 22: "Yours of 4 o'clock this afternoon is received. I have forwarded your letter to General Stuart with the suggestion that he pass by the enemy's rear if he thinks that he may get through that way. We have had nothing of the enemy today."<sup>8</sup>

Longstreet then wrote (at 7:00 p.m. on June 22) to Stuart:

General Lee has enclosed to me this letter for you, to be forwarded to you, provided you can be spared from my front, and provided that you can move across the Potomac without disclosing our plans. He speaks of your leaving via Hopewell Gap and passing by the rear of the enemy. If you can get through by this route, I think that you will be less likely to indicate what our plans are than if you should cross by passing to our rear. I forward the letter with these suggestions.

Please advise me of the condition of affairs before you leave and order General Hampton—whom I suppose you will leave in command—to report to me at Millwood [Longstreet's new location some ten miles into the Valley], as may be most agreeable to him.

And a postscript notes: "I think your passage by our rear at the moment will in a measure disclose our plans. You had better not leave us, therefore, unless you can take the proposed route in rear of the enemy."<sup>9</sup>

The order from Lee to Stuart that Longstreet says was enclosed was probably the first order from Lee quoted above, although some commentators believe it was a different message altogether, now lost.<sup>10</sup>

But that order says nothing about Stuart's route and certainly does not mention Hopewell Gap. Indeed, such a route—Hopewell Gap is in the Bull Run Ridge and leads to the east—appears inconsistent with Lee's concern that Stuart move north promptly or even with the notion of Stuart troubling Hooker as he moved across the Potomac. There is, moreover, the puzzling suggestion in Longstreet's message that Stuart should "not leave" Longstreet unless it was to pass around the enemy. But if Stuart were to cross the Potomac as soon as possible and catch up with Ewell, he would be leaving Longstreet in any event. This message is at least as obscure as any of Lee's.

What is more likely is that Hopewell Gap had come up in one-on-one discussions between Stuart and Longstreet. Stuart had conferred with Longstreet after talking to Lee and had probably begun to develop his own plan for the movement north. According to Mosby, Stuart had discussed the idea of a raid toward Washington as early as June 19.<sup>11</sup> Stuart discussed this idea at length with Mosby on June 21. Mosby outlined a plan for a raid that would "pass through" the Union army and threaten Washington. Hopewell Gap no doubt came into the picture at this point. Mosby reported that the Union army was camped with big gaps between the various corps. Mosby found it easy to slip through these gaps and believed he could lead Stuart through this way also. (Mosby used the word "through," not "around," a subtle but important difference.) Stuart probably mentioned this to Longstreet, and Longstreet may have mentioned it to Lee, but it does not show up in Lee's orders to Stuart or in Marshall's recollections of Lee's intentions.

### **Longstreet's Ambiguous Role**

James Longstreet evidently liked the indirect route because he was concerned with shielding as long as possible the movement of his corps northward. If Stuart followed in the rear of Longstreet's corps, he reasoned, this would alert Hooker to the movement of the entire army. This was, in fact, a misguided concern, since Hooker

already had abundant evidence about the northward movement of Lee's army, but in all fairness, Longstreet had no way of knowing this. Longstreet thought that Stuart's making an indirect movement away with the rest of the army might confuse Hooker. This is all supposition, and the only hard evidence we have on Longstreet's views at the time is the order quoted above. His several later accounts of these events, in his report on the battle to Lee and much later after the war, were contradictory, self-serving, and unhelpful. His official report on Gettysburg stated: "My orders to him [Stuart] were that he should ride on the right of my column as originally designated to the Shepherdstown crossing."<sup>12</sup> His first account written after the war elaborated on this: "As I was leaving the Blue Ridge, I instructed General Stuart to follow me and cross the Potomac at Shepherdstown, while I crossed at Williamsport, ten miles above. In reply to these instruction, General Stuart informed me that he had discretionary power from General Lee. Whereupon I withdrew."<sup>13</sup>

But his postwar memoirs made no attempt to reconcile these claims with the order that was actually issued. After Gettysburg had turned out badly, Longstreet clearly wanted to wash his hands of any involvement in Stuart's decisions and movements. Indeed, he indicted Stuart severely: "So our plans, adopted after deep study, were suddenly given over to gratify the youthful cavalryman's wish for a nomadic ride."<sup>14</sup>

And his brief note on the campaign in *Battles and Leaders* comments wryly, "Stuart was undertaking another wild ride around the Federal army."<sup>15</sup> Longstreet's biographers find his own explanation of these events "over-elaborate and difficult to understand" and say that he "leaves one with the impression that his own conscience was not clear."<sup>16</sup>

Douglas Southall Freeman suggests, with a delicate understatement, that Longstreet was simply in error about the Hopewell Gap route's coming from Lee. "In Longstreet's note of the 22nd to Stuart, the commander of the first corps, quoted a lost letter in

which Lee stated that Stuart might pass through Hopewell Gap and pass 'by the rear of the enemy.' Lee in his report wrote that Stuart was left to exercise his judgment to cross the Potomac 'east or west' of the Blue Ridge. Had there been any order more specific than that, Lee would have stated it."<sup>17</sup> In other words, there was no such other letter from Lee to Longstreet. Freeman further notes of Longstreet's postwar memoir: "It was written late in life, with literary assistance, and without consulting his earlier contributions . . . Because of inaccuracies, the book is more unjust to the wartime Longstreet than to any of those he criticized."<sup>18</sup>

### **Lee's Second Order to Stuart**

According to Marshall's memoirs, Longstreet's letter to Stuart troubled Lee (Marshall points out the inconsistency of the Hopewell Gap route, with Stuart moving north promptly as an aside in his memoirs) and, fearing confusion about what was desired of Stuart, he instructed Marshall to repeat the orders as given on June 22. This, still following Marshall's account, was the genesis of the second order, not a change of mind by Lee. In any event, the second order to Stuart at 5:00 p.m. on June 23 does deal explicitly with the notion of the indirect route for Stuart.

If General Hooker's army remains inactive, you can leave two brigades to watch him and withdraw with the three others but should he not appear to be moving northward, I think you had better withdraw this side of the mountain tomorrow night, cross at Shepherdstown next day, and move over to Fredericktown. You will, however, be able to judge whether you can pass around their army without hindrance, doing them all the damage you can, and cross over the river east of the mountains. In either case, you must move on and feel the right of Ewell's troops, collecting information, provisions, etc.

Give instructions to the commander of the brigades left behind to watch the flanks and rear of the army and (in the event of the

enemy leaving their front) retire from the mountains west of the Shenandoah, leaving sufficient pickets to guard the passes, and bringing everything clean up the Valley closing upon the rear of the army.

As regards the movements of the two enemy brigades moving towards Warrenton [this refers to a report that the Union cavalry had launched a raid in the direction of Warrenton, which later proved false],<sup>19</sup> the commander of the two brigades left in the mountains must do what he can to counteract them, but I think the sooner you cross into Maryland after tomorrow the better . . . The movements of Ewell's corps are as stated in my former letter, Hill's first division will reach the Potomac today [June 23] and Longstreet will follow tomorrow [June 24]. Be watchful and circumspect in all your movement.<sup>20</sup>

This note reached Stuart the evening of June 23, so "tomorrow" for Lee was June 24. Whatever ambiguities can now be discerned in the wording of this order, Lee was clear in his own mind about what he thought he had ordered Stuart to do. His first report on the campaign, written for Richmond on July 31, said: "General Stuart was directed to move into Maryland, crossing the Potomac east or west of the Blue Ridge, as in his judgment should be best, and take position on the right of our column as it advanced." His later second report confirmed this understanding.<sup>21</sup> That this was Lee's own impression of what he had ordered Stuart to do is supported by the testimony of several of his staff officers with whom he had discussed his plan for the campaign.<sup>22</sup>

This order of June 23 was almost certainly the last communication between Lee and Stuart until Stuart rode into Gettysburg on July 2. Stuart's official account of the campaign says: "The commanding general wrote me, authorizing this move, if I deemed it practicable, and also what instructions should be given the officer in command of the two brigades left in front of the army. He also notified me that one column would move via Gettysburg, the other

by Carlisle towards the Susquehanna, and directed me, after crossing to proceed with all dispatch to join the right (Early) in Pennsylvania.”<sup>23</sup> As Marshall points out in his memoirs, neither the first nor the second order gave any such details on Ewell’s movements or mentioned Early’s future position.

### **The “Third Order” from Lee to Stuart**

Long after the war was over, Stuart’s aide-de-camp Henry B. McClellan remembered a third order that he said came to Stuart late on the night of June 23.<sup>24</sup> No copy of this order has ever been found, and according to McClellan only he and Stuart read it, and it was later lost. The existence of this missing order is vouched for only by McClellan, since Stuart’s report does not go into how many orders he received or which one said what.<sup>25</sup> The existence of this order did not come up until years after the event, when the controversy over Stuart and Gettysburg had heated up. Marshall denies such an order was issued, and he had kept a careful set of copies of all orders.<sup>26</sup>

The timing is also curious. Lee’s second order was dated June 23, 5:00 p.m., and presumably was written at his headquarters, then located near Berryville, beyond Ashby’s Gap in the Blue Ridge.<sup>27</sup> Stuart was in camp at Rector’s Crossroads, in the middle of the Loudon Valley, a good twenty miles away, and it rained fiercely that night. So it must have taken the courier several hours to reach Stuart’s headquarters, and he probably arrived well into the evening of June 23. McClellan’s account makes no mention of the arrival of this second order and instead has it that “it was late in the night when a courier arrived from army headquarters bearing a dispatch marked ‘confidential.’” McClellan goes on to describe this as the missing third order, and his memory is remarkably detailed:

The letter discussed at considerable length the plan of passing around the enemy’s rear. It informed General Stuart that General Early would move upon York, Pa., and that he was desired to place his cavalry as speedily as possible with that, the advance division of Lee’s right wing. The letter suggested further that, as

the roads leading northward from Shepherdstown and Williamsport were already encumbered by the infantry, the artillery and the transportation of the army, the delay which would necessarily occur in passing by these would, perhaps, be greater than would ensue if General Stuart passed around the enemy's rear. The letter informed him further that, if he chose the latter route, General Early would receive instructions to look out for him and endeavor to communicate with him; and York, Pa., was designated as the point in the vicinity of which he was to expect to hear from Early, and as the possible (if not the probable) point of concentration of the army.<sup>28</sup>

This order seems to solve all problems. Evidently Lee not only gave Stuart authorization for what he did but gave specific instructions that Stuart was to do exactly what he did do and nothing else. There could be no question of Stuart's disobeying orders. Indeed, if one fully accepts the validity of this "lost third order" from Lee to Stuart, all Stuart's subsequent actions are explained. The order is supposed to have repeated the indirect route and said that owing to congestion on the other roads this was the only way to go north. It ordered Stuart to rendezvous with Early in York. Given all this, some authors have concluded that Stuart was following orders—that he had no choice—and that Lee should have known Stuart would be out of touch for a long time.<sup>29</sup>

In fact, the reality of this missing third order is not plausible on several grounds, and many scholars have never been convinced by McClellan's "recollections."<sup>30</sup>

McClellan described the arrival of only one order the night of June 23, and he makes no mention of the arrival of the earlier "second order," which we know existed because Marshall kept a copy (which is part of the OR). Either there was only one order on the twenty-third, worded as the record indicates, or there was this one and another one still that Lee sent a few hours after the earlier one, both of which arrived at Stuart's headquarters the same evening,



within a few hours of one another. The timing of all this is highly unlikely.

Moreover, it is difficult to see why Lee would change his mind so drastically in a few hours and then forget these orders in his own later recounting of events. It is even less plausible that Marshall had no record or even any recall of such an order. Moreover, the specifics of this order as recounted by McClellan do not ring true. Particularly telling is that at this point in the campaign Lee could not have known that Early's division would be the point of the advance on York, since Early was at that moment on the left of the advancing columns, having been the last division in Ewell's corps to cross the river. As quoted above, Lee's order to Ewell on June 22 speaks of John Imboden's operations on the left flank of the army and of supporting him with "Early's regiments."

Only several days later did Early, on orders from Ewell, cross the Cumberland Valley to move through Gettysburg and on to York. Finally, no order to Early (or Ewell, who surely would have been informed) to make contact with Stuart in York was ever issued or received, and both Ewell and Early denied any knowledge of such a plan. Stuart suggests further in his report that he and Early had an "understanding" and implies some sort of meeting between them, but nothing in the surviving record indicates any direct communication between Stuart and Early. Stuart's camp in Loudon was reasonably close to those of Lee and Longstreet, but Early had led the way up the valley, taking Winchester on June 14, and was already across the Potomac by June 22. It is hard to see how Stuart and Early could have reached an "understanding" about anything in the days just before June 23.<sup>31</sup>

Giving McClellan the benefit of the doubt, he must have been remembering the second order and confused the contents with the account Stuart had already given in his own report on the campaign. McClellan obviously wanted his retrospective account of this order to support his old chief. Stuart had died a hero, and when McClellan wrote after the war Stuart's widow and John Mosby were

engaged in a fierce effort to "clear" Stuart's name of any blame for the loss at Gettysburg.

On the slender evidence of Stuart's self-serving account and McClellan's loyal recollection, this dubious third order threatens to become accepted by usage. Indeed, this third order is now well entrenched in the literature, and some established scholars accept its validity without question.<sup>32</sup>

Burke Davis, in what is probably the best biography of Stuart, takes it for granted that McClellan's late-night dispatch on June 23 was the second order from Lee and assumes that, while McClellan thought the order had been lost, it is in fact the same one contained in the OR. Davis makes no effort to reconcile this interpretation with McClellan's detailed "recollection" of its contents, which were totally different from those of the second order.<sup>33</sup>

There is another curious anomaly in the literature that adds confusion. Virgil Carrington Jones's definitive book on Mosby contains the following passage about the moment just before Stuart departed on his ride: "Stuart promptly wrote Lee his final message before setting out on the circuitous route that was to throw him late at Gettysburg. In it, guided partly the advice of the scout at his side [Mosby], he gave an exact description of the path he would follow, the identical line of march proposed by Mosby two days prior."<sup>34</sup>

There is, of course, no such communication in the *Official Record*, and also no mention of it by Lee, Marshall, Stuart, McClellan, or any of the other participants in these events. Jones gives no source for this statement, but one presumes it was Mosby in one of his numerous postwar contributions to this jumbled history. It seems hard to credit this account, however.

So much for the surviving written record and the firsthand accounts of the participants. On this relatively slender base, there has grown up over time a substantial secondary literature analyzing and interpreting the primary material. These works lead us to the heart of the Stuart-Gettysburg debate, and we must undertake a brief perusal of the best known of them.

## 5. The Great Debate over the Orders

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Nearly everyone alive at the time, both North and South, thought Gettysburg was the turning point in the Civil War. When the three days at Gettysburg failed to produce a Southern victory, the Confederacy was lost. This, it seems, was the overwhelming consensus, both North and South. It was therefore almost inevitable that the postwar histories and memoirs would search endlessly for someone to blame for the Confederate defeat. Even though he later died a hero's death, Stuart had always been a controversial figure, and many thought he must bear a large portion of the responsibility. The debate over Stuart's role at Gettysburg began almost as soon as the battle was over and continues today. Much of this debate has centered, in particular, on the orders Lee gave Stuart and on what the army commander did or did not tell the cavalry leader to do. The many complex issues connected with the outcome at Gettysburg thus get reduced to, What did Lee order Stuart to do? and Did Stuart obey or disobey Lee's orders?

### Stuart's Defenders

Stuart's charisma survived him, and he has not wanted for defenders, the most prominent of whom was John Singleton Mosby, Stuart's favorite scout and a famous cavalryman in his own right. Mosby's postwar defense of Stuart first appeared in *Battles and Leaders*, and he later expanded this defense into a book.<sup>1</sup> Mosby felt he owed

Stuart everything and would hear no criticism of any of his actions. As James Ramage points out, "When Stuart was blamed for contributing to Lee's Gettysburg defeat by being away, Mosby felt that the critics were attacking him as well."<sup>2</sup> Mosby was a lawyer and he defended his client, Stuart, by in effect countersuing Lee as well as his staff, Longstreet, Early, Heth, and everyone else in sight.

Mosby focused in particular on the two reports Lee wrote on the campaign and on the accounts later written independently by Lee's staff officers A. L. Long and Charles Marshall. Unfortunately, Mosby's passionate defense of Stuart was seriously flawed and was not a useful contribution to the historical record. He substituted sarcasm for analysis. For example, "Stuart's instruction required him to remain in Virginia and march north on the right flank of the two corps that were with Lee . . . and to join Ewell on the Susquehanna . . . As they were widely separated he could not be with Ewell and Longstreet at the same time . . . General Lee's staff officers think he ought to have done it. I do not think he possessed any such magical powers."<sup>3</sup>

Mosby's grasp of the facts was also decidedly slippery. For example, he relates that as Lee's army moved north, "Ewell was then in the Cumberland Valley with Rodes and Johnson's divisions, while Early was moving north on a parallel line near the western slope of the South Mountain."<sup>4</sup> In fact, Early was well west of the South Mountain until Ewell ordered him to York via Gettysburg on June 25.<sup>5</sup>

Mosby repeatedly writes of Lee's orders instructing Stuart to join the army "on the Susquehanna" when in fact the orders speak of joining the army on its march "towards the Susquehanna," an important difference.<sup>6</sup>

Mosby's account went too far even for Stuart's other partisans and was refuted by many other former Confederate officers, most notably in a review of his book by former cavalryman T. M. R. Talcott.<sup>7</sup> The heavy sarcasm, the blatant inaccuracies, and his obvious adulation of Stuart do much to harm Stuart's case. He is a skilled advocate, but he overdoes it.<sup>8</sup>

Mosby's account was but the first in a long line of such hagiographic treatments of Stuart's role in these events. The first modern biography of Stuart, by John Thomason, unfortunately was cut from the same cloth, and since it became the standard source, it has misguided many later researchers.<sup>9</sup> There are far too many other such works for me to consider all of them, and there would be little point in doing so. But it does seem necessary to look at the most widely known and often-cited defense of Stuart in the recent literature, Mark Nesbitt's book tellingly titled *Saber and Scapegoat*.<sup>10</sup>

Nesbitt, in short, concludes that Stuart has become a scapegoat, and much of his reasoning centers on the orders we have been considering above. Nesbitt devotes an entire chapter to a detailed, often ingenious reexamination of Lee's orders,<sup>11</sup> and they come up repeatedly elsewhere in his text. The heart of his argument is that Stuart was following orders and had no choice but to do what he did.

Commenting on Lee's first order of June 22, Nesbitt writes: "In fact, Lee knew that the entire Union army was out there too, with its cavalry, and might impede Stuart. At this point, June 22, when he ordered Stuart to operate in Maryland, he was necessarily ordering him to ride around the Union army, which he thought was still on the west (or south) side of the Potomac. Lee probably expected Stuart to be out of touch for three or four days." In fact, Lee's first order said nothing about passing around the enemy—that wording came in the second order. Nesbitt repeats this interpretation in his next paragraph: "Regardless of the questions asked later by critics of Stuart's role in the campaign, to Stuart on June 22, there was only one route open if he were to obey Lee's orders: across the Potomac and around the Union army." He then cites Longstreet's message to Stuart on June 22, but that order actually made it clear that there was an option to the indirect route around the rear of the Union army. "You had better not leave us, therefore, unless you can take the proposed route in rear of the enemy." In other words, Stuart could have moved north with the rest of the army west of the

mountains. This seems to contradict Nesbitt's previous contention. And of course this entire exchange took place before the order from Lee on June 23 (that is, Lee's second order), which mentions for the first time the idea of the indirect route.

Nesbitt quotes the order of June 23 from Lee, which clearly indicates that Stuart did have a choice about the route to take north. He makes no comment on the apparent mystery in the order—the “not” in the third line, second paragraph (about which more a bit later)—but devotes a large part of the next page to an ingenious if confused effort to interpret the difference between “remain-ing inactive” and “not moving northwards.” “Was there a difference between the enemy remaining ‘inactive’ and his ‘not moving northward’? There had better be for Stuart's orders depended upon which was the case.”

Nesbitt does not comment on Lee's very explicit orders that “after crossing the river, you must move on, and feel the right of Ewell's troops,” or “I think the sooner you cross into Maryland, after tomorrow, the better.” His interpretation of Lee's explicit order to move promptly is baffling. “Lee said . . . do not cross the Potomac before the 25th, but as soon as you can after that.” A page later Nesbitt has Lee “telling Stuart exactly where he should ride,” when this is not discussed in any of the orders.

Nesbitt's account of these historical questions is quite emotional:

Perhaps, the most remarkable thing about such studies is that historians have the advantage of hind-sight as well as plenty of time in which to analyze and decide, to weigh and ponder, to propose and condemn. Stuart had none of that. He made life-and-death decisions from the saddle, with the same aching back, empty stomach, and blurry, sleepy mind as the rest of his troopers, and he had to do it quickly . . . Decisions can only be made once, with the knowledge, experience and limited foresight that is available at the time . . . certainly it is all anyone can ask him to do.<sup>12</sup>

Surely the same problems have been faced by most military commanders in most actions in most wars. It goes with the territory. Moreover, Stuart was a professional soldier doing what he was good at doing and loved to do. He was not a tragic or pathetic figure and needs no sympathy from us.

The existence of the “third order” from Lee to Stuart is also important to Nesbitt’s case. Nesbitt dismisses Marshall’s assurances that Lee’s second order was attempting to make it clear to Stuart that he was to take his place on the right flank of the army in Maryland. Nesbitt attributes this interpretation to animus on Marshall’s part and a desire to shift the blame for the defeat at Gettysburg from Lee to Stuart and, implicitly, a similar desire on the part of Lee himself and all his other staff officers.

All in all, Nesbitt’s defense does not improve significantly on that advanced by Mosby over a hundred years earlier. Superficially, it is loaded with details and appears to be closely reasoned, but it reflects selectivity and manifest bias throughout.

### Other “Deconstructions” of Lee’s Orders

The Mosby and Nesbitt books are the most comprehensive statements in Stuart’s defense, but the passionate defense of Stuart continues still.<sup>13</sup> And a kind of legalistic, grammarian’s defense based on the alleged confusion in the orders is found throughout the literature. The authoritative *West Point Atlas* speaks of Lee’s orders as “so vague and allowed such latitude that he could interpret them to suit himself.”<sup>14</sup>

David Martin’s solid book on Gettysburg says, “Oddly enough, it cannot be shown from surviving evidence that Lee actually specifically ordered Stuart to let him know when the enemy began crossing the Potomac. Lee’s orders of 22 and 23 June do not give this command in so many words.”<sup>15</sup>

Alan Nolan also seems to assume that Lee was at fault in not giving Stuart the most detailed instructions: “In the June 22 communication Lee had asked a question regarding the enemy: ‘Do you

know where he is and what he is doing?’ He should have told Stuart that this question needed a prompt answer and that Stuart’s one task was to keep him constantly informed of the enemy’s movements. Lee did not do this.”<sup>16</sup> And Nolan could have added, “Lee should have known that this would never have occurred to Stuart, left to his own devices,” since this is implied.

Nesbitt, Nolan, and others fill many pages with elaborate parsings and critiques of the grammar and sentence structure of Lee’s orders. One comes away from these discussions feeling that no order issued by any general in any war would survive such leisurely, imaginative literary deconstruction.

### Lee’s Earlier Orders to Stuart

Were Lee’s orders really so badly written as to mislead or confuse Stuart in late June 1863? One test may be to see how these orders compare with orders Lee issued to Stuart in earlier campaigns where the outcome was all that could have been desired. A few examples, taken more or less randomly from the official record, will suffice.

TO GENERAL J. E. B. STUART

Commanding Cavalry

Headquarters, Army of Northern Virginia November 9, 1862

p.m 10.

I find from dispatches from Genl Jackson that the enemy has abandoned Snicker’s and Ashby’s Gaps & concentrated his main force along Gap Railroad, in the vicinity of Piedmont, Genl McClellan’s headquarters being at Rectortown. This may be for obtaining support by the railroad, or it may be with the view of making a descent Front Royal or Strasburg, to intercept Genl Jackson in his egress the Valley. Can you ascertain what he is doing in your front? If stationary or what he is about? If he moves into the Valley, I will send Longstreet’s corps to cut off his communication with the rail—You will see the necessity therefore of watching him closely. You will be pleased to learn that upon the abandonment of Snicker’s Gap, A.



P. Hill pushed his pickets to Snickersville, & that Maj White's battalion of cavalry took 104 prisoners & captured some wagons.<sup>17</sup>

TO GENERAL J. E. B. STUART Commanding Cavalry  
Headquarters February 15, 1863

General: That you may be advised of what is transpiring within the enemy's lines, I send you the last reports of scouts. A large body of troops have been reported to have landed at Newport News on the 11th. I think there is but little doubt that a corps of the enemy has gone down the river. It is said in the Northern papers that it is Genl W. F. Smith's. It may be for some special purpose, or it may be the beginning of a general move & change of base. If you find on your arrival at Culpeper that such is the case & that the opportunity of striking a damaging blow at the enemy is greater on the Potomac than in the Valley, you are desired to give precedence to the former & take measures accordingly. In that event you must notify Genl. W. F. Jones and keep me advised of your designs and operations and how I can facilitate them. I do not enclose Genl. Hampton's letter reporting enemy movements on the right as he can inform you and probably give you a later intelligence.<sup>18</sup>

To General JEB Stuart,  
August 19, 1861  
Commanding Cavalry  
General:

I desire you to rest your men today, refresh your horses, prepare rations & everything for the march tomorrow. Get what information you can of fords, roads, & position of enemy, so that your march can be made understandingly & with vigour. I sent to you Capt Mason an experienced bridge builder, &c., whom I think will be able to aid you in the destruction of the bridge, &c. When that is accomplished, or while in train of execution, as circumstances permit, I wish you to operate back towards Culpeper

Court House, creating such confusion & consternation as you can without unnecessarily exposing your men till you feel Longstreet's right. Take position then on his right & hold yourself in reserve, & act as circumstances may require, I wish to know during the day how you proceed in your preparations. They will require the personal attention of all your officers. The last reports from the signal stations yesterday evening were that the enemy was breaking up his principal encampments & moving in the direction of Culpeper Court House.<sup>19</sup>

These earlier orders from Lee to Stuart reveal the same casual, conversational tone and phrasing that some would persuade us made the orders of June 22 and 23 too vague and imprecise to give Stuart proper guidance. Most of Lee's orders to Stuart were like that, giving general direction but leaving discretion and options up to Stuart "to take measures accordingly" and to act "as circumstances may require." Stuart should have had no more trouble interpreting and acting on the fateful pre-Gettysburg orders than he had with all the others.

The point lost sight of in the literary "deconstructions" is that Stuart was a trained, experienced, and skilled leader of the army's cavalry who did not need to be led by the hand. Based on two years of working with Stuart, Lee trusted him in a way he would never have trusted a Mosby or an Imboden (or perhaps a Joseph Wheeler or a Bedford Forest). He had come to rely on Stuart's skills as one of his army's strengths.

### **The Real Ambiguity in the Orders**

One genuinely troublesome point has been noted about the Lee order of June 23: it does present an apparent confusion that numerous authors have grappled with. The order says that if Hooker remains "inactive" Stuart is to leave two brigades to watch him and withdraw with three; but if Hooker "should not appear to be moving northwards," Stuart should "withdraw" to the other side of the mountain and follow the army up the Shenandoah Valley.

Taken literally, as it has come down to us in the *OR*, the order does not appear to make sense, since it appears to be ordering Stuart to do the same thing regardless of what Hooker does. Nolan makes this same point: "Read literally, the orders of June 23 set forth different movements for Stuart depending upon the same facts . . . This almost certainly represented a careless ambiguity."

Nolan goes on to argue, "It is apparent that the word 'not' was unintended."<sup>20</sup> "Apparent" might seem too strong a word, but "possible" certainly would be appropriate.

So perhaps there is no mystery or contradiction to puzzle over. The word "not" in the second contingency outlined by Lee was a transcription error by Marshall, who probably drafted the order for Lee. Take out the word "not," or change it to "now," and the order makes easy good sense and is consistent with the earlier one.

One is highly tempted to accept this interpretation, but the difficulty remains that Marshall's postwar memoirs quote the order with the "not" intact, with no suggestion that this was an error or a misprint in the original. On the other hand, Marshall's memoirs were not finished by the editor, Gen. Sir Frederick Maurice, until some years after Marshall's death and were not published for more years after that. In those days manuscripts were copied and recopied by hand, and it is quite possible that an error crept into the text after Marshall saw it for the last time. The original of the order was lost, and all the later authors have worked from copies. (It is sobering to remember that this is true of much of the material in the *OR* as well.)

Other authors have continued the exegesis of this issue. Edward Longacre has a very imaginative interpretation of the "not." "On the other hand, Stuart should cross west of the Blue Ridge and proceed to Frederick, Md., should 'Hooker not appear to be moving northward.' The apparently conflicting set of conditions may have meant that Lee feared the Federals were preparing a southward march on Richmond, a movement Stuart might observe and oppose from a strategic location such as Frederick."<sup>21</sup>

It is not immediately clear why Lee would have thought of Frederick, well north of the Potomac, as a strategic location from which Stuart could deal with a Union army south of the Potomac, moving on Richmond. Longacre does not elaborate on this point.

Longacre adds further to our confusion with the following comment: "Later Lee's aide, Charles Marshall, claimed that subsequent orders from Lee to Stuart—copied by Marshall on the 23rd—revoked the 5PM instructions and demanded that Stuart stay close to the right flank of the army. Though later lost, Stuart received and later admitted ignoring these orders. So, at any rate, John Mosby quoted Marshall as stating in 1877."<sup>22</sup> The source for the existence of what would be a "fourth order" (or perhaps a radically different version of the "third order") appears to be an unrecorded exchange between Mosby and Marshall reported later by Mosby in a letter to L. L. Lomax. Longacre does not comment on the fact that this account is, of course, totally inconsistent with the published accounts by both Mosby and Marshall. One is uncertain how seriously to take this new "evidence."

It is worth noting that Marshall's own memoirs discuss the second order and that he saw no confusion or contradiction in it. To him, "It covers the case of the Federal commander remaining inactive and also that of his not moving northward. In the former event, Stuart was to leave two brigades to watch him and with the other three to withdraw, and in the latter event, Stuart's whole command was to be withdrawn . . . this side of the mountains tomorrow . . . cross the Potomac at Shepherdstown and move toward Fredericktown the next day." The case of the enemy's moving northward had been covered in the first order, Marshall felt.<sup>23</sup> But this interpretation settles nothing and is as puzzling in its own way as the order itself.

Douglas Southall Freeman, almost alone among the major commentators on these events, finds no confusion in the orders as they have come down to us in the OR. He argues that this second order must be understood as a supplement to the earlier one with a

newly added concern over just-reported Union cavalry movement toward Warrenton. This last provides the missing element. Thus, if the enemy is not moving northward, then perhaps he is making a feint southward; but Stuart is to ignore such a movement and rejoin the main army west of the mountains with his entire command, thus avoiding the risk of getting embroiled in a new action with the Union forces east of the mountains and south of the Potomac. But if the Union army remains inactive (is not on the move), then Stuart can move north, either east or west off the mountains as he judges best, as his previous orders stated. This interpretation explains the mysterious “not moving north” and is plausible.<sup>24</sup>

The recent Gettysburg book by Scott Bowden and Bill Ward has also contributed an interesting interpretation of what the orders meant. These authors point out that the word “around” was also unfortunate and imprecise. Perhaps this is what led to confusion. Lee certainly could not have imagined Stuart’s passing around the entire Army of the Potomac, whose major units were scattered from the Bull Run Mountains to Fredericksburg and Washington. He must have meant “pass around those enemy units that lie in the way of your movement north to cross the Potomac.” This implies that Stuart would have literally ridden between (as Mosby had originally proposed) those Union corps closest to the Loudon Valley, turned north, crossed the Potomac west of Leesburg, and rejoined the army in Maryland.<sup>25</sup>

This discussion is by no means an exhaustive account of all the articles and books that have attempted to find the “real” meaning of these famous orders. As I have tried to make clear, I feel the problem these treatments are addressing is largely of our own creation. These agonized efforts to decipher the messages from Lee and Longstreet to Stuart miss the larger reality that these orders were only part of a series of conversations and orders, the main thrust of which was clear to all concerned. In the end, the exact wording of the order of June 23 was not critical to what Stuart did or its consequences.

### Stuart's Ride North as a Raid

Whatever can be said about the wording of Lee's several orders to Stuart, one thing is abundantly clear: they did not order a raid on Washington. Yet this is what Stuart undertook.

Freeman thinks that Stuart had originally planned to conduct a spoiling raid on the Union rear and return to the army before the move north but that Brandy Station and the subsequent cavalry actions prevented this. He was eager to get back to this plan, which would perhaps explain Stuart's fixation on having a raid even if it clashed with his other responsibilities on the march north.<sup>26</sup>

There is no firm evidence of this, but a careful reading of Stuart's report, written after Gettysburg, and Mosby's postwar book on the campaign does support Freeman's interpretation. Both make it clear that they saw the movement of the cavalry that began on June 24, from its very inception, as a "raid," not simply a movement north, by the best route, to rejoin the army. Stuart's account of the events is worth quoting at length.

I resumed my own position at Rector's Crossroads and staying in constant communication with the commanding general, had scouts busily engaged in watching and reporting the enemy's movements and reporting the same to the commanding general. In this difficult search, the fearless and indefatigable major Mosby was particularly active and efficient. His information was always accurate and reliable. The enemy retained one corps (the Fifth) at Aldie, and kept his cavalry near enough to make an attack on the latter productive of no solid benefits, so I began to look for some other point at which to strike an effective blow. I submitted to the commanding general the plan of leaving a brigade or so in my present front, while passing through Hopewell or some other gap in the Bull Run Mountains, attain the enemy's rear, passing between his main body and Washington, and cross over into Maryland, joining our army north of the Potomac. The commanding general wrote me, authorizing such a move, if I deemed it practicable, and also

what instructions should be given to the officer in command of the two brigades left in front of the enemy.<sup>27</sup>

This is at best a selective account of his orders from Lee. It says nothing of the very specific conversations between Lee and Stuart about the northward movement of the entire army that took place after Stuart had “resumed” his position in Loudon on June 21, nor does it mention Longstreet’s role in these discussions. Indeed, it appears that the movement of the entire army followed from the “plan” Stuart submitted to Lee.

Stuart’s version is that he “began to look for some other point at which to strike an effective blow” and that the plan to “attain the enemy’s rear” followed from this initiative. Joining the army north of the Potomac then becomes the conclusion of “striking an effective blow,” not the main purpose of the move in the first place. Mosby’s account is equally clear on this point. “I pointed out to Stuart the opportunity to strike a damaging blow and suggested to him to cross the Bull Run Mountains and pass through the middle of Hooker’s army.”<sup>28</sup>

Stuart’s staff officer William W. Blackford’s account, while generally supportive of Stuart, is also revealing on this point: “Two plans were presented by Stuart and submitted to General Lee’s consideration: one to take the route through the valley, and the other, which Stuart was ardently in favor of, to sweep around the rear of Meade’s army and dash north past him, and between him and Washington; cutting his communications, breaking up the railroads, and doing all the damage possible, and to join Early in Pennsylvania. General Lee left the decision of the question to Stuart.”<sup>29</sup>

As Sears suggests, the difference between “not moving” and “inactive” “does not seem to have mystified Jeb Stuart since he already knew what he intended to do and simply ignored it.”<sup>30</sup> Stuart had decided to launch a raid deep behind the Union lines, then rejoin the army in Maryland or Pennsylvania or wherever it happened to be by then. Stuart did not plan his best route north with the army;

he planned to raid well east of what would have been the shortest route north. He was thinking east, not north. As Bowden and Ward put it, Stuart set out on "the raid that wasn't ordered."<sup>31</sup>

Stuart was, to put it mildly, less than forthcoming to Lee about these intentions. Stuart undoubtedly believed he could combine the two objectives. He had, after all, ridden around the Union army twice, and Lee had allowed these risky ventures. Were not these historical precedents some justification for what Stuart intended to do? A moment's reflection should have told him the answer was no, because the setting and the contexts were very different. In the case of the earlier raids, Lee's army was safely entrenched and well screened by infantry pickets and scouts. The only way his cavalry could give him the intelligence he wanted was through expeditions to penetrate the enemy's rear. And in both earlier cases, Lee explicitly warned Stuart against taking unnecessary risks or losing sight of his primary objective. Nothing in the orders Lee gave Stuart on June 22 or June 23 suggests that Lee viewed Stuart's movement before Gettysburg as another such expedition. This time he was not ordering Stuart to undertake a deep penetration in order to gain intelligence, he was ordering him to move north and screen the flank of the army. And the army's situation was very different. Lee was undertaking a wide flanking movement around a strong enemy, and until he could reconsolidate his army he would be very vulnerable. It was obviously vital that Stuart also move north and screen and scout for the main army during this movement. If the route Stuart was to travel was uncertain, his main mission was not. No possible interpretation of "now" or "not" carries with it any approval for such a raid eastward.

There is another relevant point. Would Lee, at the outset of a new campaign, send Stuart off east on a raid on Washington? Would he, in other words, deliberately and by design separate his scouting and screening force from the rest of the army? If Stuart had raised this idea explicitly, Lee almost certainly would have not consented. It was commonly understood in the army that one of the several fatal



errors Hooker made in the Chancellorsville battle was sending his entire cavalry force under George Stoneman off on a raid toward Richmond and out of the battle.<sup>32</sup> Lee would hardly have made the same mistake a few months later.

### **Summary: Stuart and His Orders**

Lee's own judgment, expressed in his report after the battle, was that Stuart acted within the discretion he had been granted, and this must be accepted as correct. Stuart did not "disobey" the letter of his orders. But he did totally ignore some parts. He certainly did not "take charge of Jenkins's brigade" and give it necessary orders or worry about what was going on in the van. In his own later account, Stuart attempted to blame Jenkins for not doing the scouting Lee wanted Stuart to do. But Lee had explicitly put Stuart in charge of Jenkins, and Stuart simply disregarded this order. He also took his best subordinate officers with him and left in charge of the army's remaining cavalry in the valley an officer whose judgment he did not trust and who, in the event, did not perform well. In all these regards, Stuart was not thinking as the army's cavalry commander.

Finally, Stuart also ignored Lee's words of caution. He continued on his roundabout route even after it was clear that his passage was very much "hindered." It was this "hindrance" that made it impossible for Stuart to cross the river "as soon after tomorrow as possible," but Stuart ignored that admonishment as well. Taking the main force of the army's cavalry off on a raid at the outset of a crucial campaign can scarcely be called "circumspect."

Lee's orders did give Stuart discretion about crossing the Potomac east or west of the Blue Ridge, and if "east of the mountains" meant passing around some of the enemy, well and good if this could be accomplished "without hindrance." But Lee was clear that Stuart was to cross the Potomac as soon as possible and make contact with the army in Maryland soon thereafter. Nothing in either order suggests that Lee thought of Stuart's movement as a prolonged expedition that would take him out of touch with the army for many

days. It is an exaggeration to say that the orders were so vague and allowed such latitude that he could interpret them to suit himself, but it is true that Lee had considerable faith in Stuart's judgment and did not trouble himself with the precise details of how he would execute his orders. In retrospect, that was Lee's greatest mistake of the campaign, perhaps of the war.

Stuart did not end up doing what Lee had wanted him to do, and the army "was much embarrassed" (as Lee put it later) by the absence of the cavalry. Thus "the Army of Northern Virginia moved into the Free States in two separate invasions."<sup>33</sup> At this point, Lee's plan for the campaign had started to come unraveled, but Lee could not know that yet because he did not know what was in Stuart's mind.

## 6. Options for the Ride North

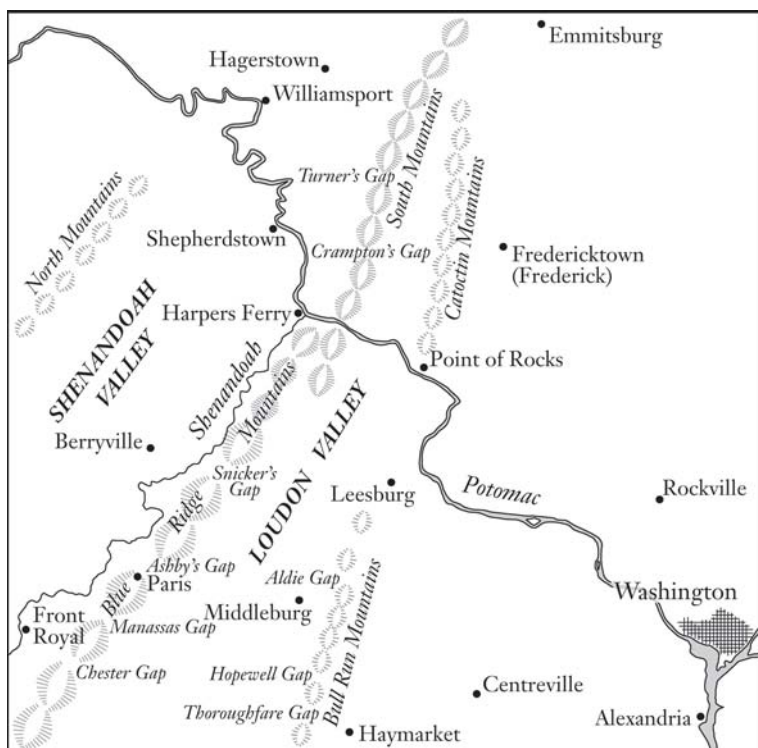
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Stuart's most ardent advocates would have it that, given Lee's orders. "Stuart had no choice"<sup>1</sup> but to follow the indirect route he did. But as we have seen, this is almost certainly wrong. However one interprets Lee's orders to Stuart, they state clearly that Stuart had at least two options to choose from for his route north into Maryland and beyond. In fact, he had more than two options, and confusion on this point has contributed to the great debate about what Stuart could or should have done. And the confusion still continues in the literature.

### **The Terrain Factor**

The terrain in northeastern Virginia where Stuart found himself deserves some consideration, since it is important for an understanding of Stuart's options and the events leading up to his actual ride to Gettysburg.

Map 2 presents the terrain involved. The Blue Ridge mountain range refers to narrow ridges running roughly north to south, rising to a height of several thousand feet, near what is now the western border of Virginia. The Shenandoah Valley is a valley between this range and other ranges to the west and is some thirty to forty miles wide. The Shenandoah River meanders along the eastern edges of the valley and branches into two streams farther toward the lower



MAP 2. The mountains and the Loudon Valley

end of the valley. A major north-south road and numerous east-west roads ran along the floor of the valley.

The Bull Run Ridge is a separate formation some twenty miles to the east of the Blue Ridge, and the area between it and the Blue Ridge is a separate valley, called the Loudon Valley. All these ridges are continuations of the mountains in Maryland and Pennsylvania. (On many maps of the time the Bull Run Ridge is called the Catocin mountain range, which is the name of the ridge in Maryland.)

Numerous passes (or "gaps") through the Blue Ridge link the Loudon Valley and the Shenandoah Valley. They are, from south to north, Chester Gap, which carried the Culpeper to Winchester Road; Manassas Gap, which carried the Manassas Gap Railway east-

west; Ashby's Gap, which carried the southern arm of the Fairfax-Winchester ("Little River") Turnpike; Snicker's Gap, which carried the northern arm of the Little River Turnpike; Gregory's Gap; and Vestal Gap, the closest to Harpers Ferry at the northern end of the valley. On the eastern side of the Loudon Valley there are five main passes through the Bull Run Ridge. Going south to north, they are Glasscock's Gap, through which passed the Culpeper-Winchester road; Thoroughfare Gap, which carried the rail line to the west; Hopewell Gap; Aldie Gap, where the Little River Turnpike crossed the ridge (and west of which it divided into its northern and southern continuations); and Clark's Gap, near Leesburg. Three main east-west roads (or turnpikes) crossed Loudon Valley, and a major north-south road went up the middle of the valley. Both valleys were fertile agricultural land, full of scattered farmsteads and small crossroads hamlets, all well connected by a network of good, if unpaved, smaller roads.

The Loudon Valley between the two ridges had been a frequent battleground for much of the war and, in between battles, a kind of no-man's-land and the favorite stamping ground of Mosby and his Confederate guerrillas. (Mosby was proud that it was sometimes called "Mosby's Confederacy.")

### **Crossing the Potomac**

The Potomac River marks a meandering northern border to both valleys and all of Virginia, stretching all the way from Washington to Harpers Ferry and beyond. Harpers Ferry marks the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley, Point of Rocks marked the end of the Bull Run Ridge at the river, and Sandy Hook was where the Blue Ridge range ended at the river close to Harpers Ferry. There were no bridges across the Potomac between the Chain Bridge (then called the Little Falls Bridge), on the Western suburbs of Washington, and the B&O Railroad bridge at Harpers Ferry. Small bridges had existed at Conrad's Ferry and Edwards Ferry but had been destroyed earlier in the war. There were also numerous ferry points and many well-established fords.



FIGURE 9. Harpers Ferry, at the junction of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers at the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley, as seen from the heights on the Maryland side of the river. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

On June 16, Gen. G. K. Warren, the chief engineer for the Union Army of the Potomac, prepared the following list of Potomac crossings for Union army chief of staff Daniel Butterfield:

At Hancock there is a ferry. At low water it is fordable. At Green Springs, Stuart's cavalry force made their crossing in the raid on Chambersburg last year. Williamsport is the best ford on the river, made so by General Patterson . . . At the mouth of the Opequon is Forman's Ford. Blackford's Ford is a fine ford, just below Shepherdstown, where Lee's army recrossed after the battle of Antietam . . . Between Hancock and Blackford's Ford the Potomac in its present state is fordable in several other places for infantry and cavalry, sufficient so as to turn any small force guarding the main fords. At the dam above Harpers Ferry we had a pontoon bridge on the 23rd of May. The river is fordable at Harpers Ferry . . . the river is full of rocks from here down to Berlin; here there is a rope

ferry and a good place for a pontoon bridge above the piers . . . At Point of Rocks pontoons can be laid . . . From here there are rocks and islands down to near Noland's Ford, where Lee's army crossed into Maryland last year. Hauling Ford is good . . . Conrad's Ferry, near Leesburg, is a good place for a pontoon bridge . . . Above Edwards Ferry, we can make a pontoon bridge . . . Conrads and Edwards are contiguous to Leesburg . . . We have bridges at Little Falls, Georgetown and Long Bridge [in Washington].<sup>2</sup>

In addition, contemporary maps list many more informal places where horsemen could cross depending on the state of the river. Getting horses and men across the Potomac was easy or difficult depending on the depth and current of the river, which in turn were controlled by rain and other weather conditions in the mountains to the west, where the Potomac rose. In the Gettysburg campaign the Union built a large double-span pontoon bridge over the river at Edwards Ferry near Leesburg, and the Confederates built a pontoon span at Martinsburg.

### **The Meaning of "East of the Mountains"**

On June 21 Stuart had made camp at Rector's Crossroads, and the next day he moved to Salem at the lower end of the Loudon Valley and nearer its eastern edge.<sup>3</sup> Stuart's options for moving north as discussed in his orders were either "west" or "east" of the mountains. Since he was camped east of the Blue Ridge, the first option would have meant crossing though the Blue Ridge and following the main army up the valley of the Shenandoah to cross at Shepherdstown. It is clear from the communications received earlier that Stuart and all concerned understood this option in just this way.

The second option, moving east of the mountains, would have appeared to be more direct, since Stuart could have moved directly north without first detouring to the west. It is at this point that confusion over geography and terminology may have led to misunderstanding between Stuart and Lee and almost certainly has caused

a perplexity among students of the campaign that continues today. Did “east of the mountains” mean east of the Blue Ridge range or east of the Bull Run range or both? The route proposed by Mosby and adopted by Stuart chose the latter interpretation: east of the mountains meant east of all the mountains and east of the Union army as well.

But there was another interpretation that would have been clear to Stuart, consistent with Lee’s orders, and in fact the shortest route for getting from the rear of the army to its right-front flank. That route would have been due north from his campground in southern Loudon, east of the Blue Ridge but west of the Bull Run Ridge.

When people in northern Virginia in 1863 spoke of the “mountains,” they usually meant the Blue Ridge mountain range. It seems eminently reasonable to assume that when Lee spoke of the “mountains” he meant the Blue Ridge, not the Bull Run Ridge. Stuart could travel north either west or east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. What Lee probably expected was that Stuart could find his way “around” or through such of the Union army as were still in the Loudon Valley and then cross the river. In fact, the Loudon Valley was free of Union troops, except perhaps for scouts. Even the Union cavalry was gone after June 21, but Lee’s message to Stuart on June 22 indicates that he did not know this. The Loudon Valley had been thick with bluecoats only a few days earlier. But by the twenty-second Stuart’s scouts had pushed all the way to the gaps in the Bull Run mountain range and found no enemy. Only by moving east through the Bull Run Ridge would Stuart would have encountered Federals on his way to cross the river and move into Maryland.

He need not have done that, for the quickest way north from his camp at Salem–Rector’s Crossroads on June 24 was straight up the central Loudon Valley through Lovettsville to cross the Potomac into Maryland somewhere between Point of Rocks and Sandy Hook. The ferry at Berlin would have been an obvious and easy crossing point and was the terminus in Loudon of the main south-north road



up the middle of the valley. Stuart would have been on secondary local roads on the first leg of such a ride but would have picked up the Berlin Turnpike halfway up the valley. Even allowing for detours, it would have been at most a forty-mile ride.<sup>4</sup> Stuart could have reached the Potomac and crossed it in an easy one-day ride from Salem. As noted in Warren's report to Gen. Joseph Hooker, there was a ferry point at Berlin, which had been used by both sides in the war, and there were well-established fords both east and west of the ferry point. Assuming he crossed at Berlin, Stuart could have gone left to Knoxville and then on through the gap in the mountains to Brownsville and Sharpsburg at the foot of the Cumberland Valley. He thus could have avoided passing through Sandy Hook, where there might have been Union forces. If Stuart found that he faced opposition moving toward Knoxville along the river, he could have turned north and taken the road through Petersburg to Crampton's Gap in the mountains just below Burkettsville, which would have also led him to Sharpsburg. The distance from the Berlin crossing to Sharpsburg by either route would not have been more than thirty miles. From Sharpsburg, several good roads led up the valley to Chambersburg, a distance of some forty miles.

Stuart could have still followed this route on June 26 when it was clear that he could not pass "unhindered" around the Union army east of the Bull Run Ridge. He presumably would have been moving faster then and almost certainly would have been in Maryland at least by the morning of June 27. Later that same day, or the next morning at the latest, he would have been in the Cumberland Valley on A. P. Hill's flank, moving along the western edge of the South mountain range. Another day's ride would have had him somewhere near the main Confederate force, which at this point was in Chambersburg. He could have reported to Lee and briefed him on what he had learned from the several brushes with Union troops he would no doubt have had along the way.

This is probably what Lee expected Stuart to be doing when he wrote of his crossing "east of the mountains." Colonel Marshall,

in his postwar memoirs, says, "Lee certainly meant that Stuart was to cross immediately east of the mountains, so as to be close to the right flank of the army. Stuart interpreted the words to mean that he might cross anywhere east of the mountains."<sup>5</sup>

We gain considerable additional support for this interpretation of Lee's intentions when we ask which map Lee and his staff were probably using when the plans for the move north were under discussion. At Lee's request the Second Corps topographer, Jedediah Hotchkiss, had prepared a campaign map covering the area of Baltimore-York-Harrisburg-Leesburg-Harpers Ferry. This was in considerable detail, in some areas showing individual farmhouses and side roads. The original map was in two sections and was some three feet square. The focus of this map was the ground Lee was proposing to advance into, not the Shenandoah Valley or the Loudon Valley, although it does show the Bull Run Ridge as well as the Blue Ridge. (This map is plate 116 in the OR Atlas.)

On the other hand, we also have several maps of the Shenandoah-Loudon area prepared by Hotchkiss on which the Bull Run mountain range simply does not appear. Hotchkiss knew Virginia very well and the valley in particular, having been Jackson's map-maker.<sup>6</sup> But his maps of the valley and the "mountains" typically do not show the Bull Run Ridge as part of the Shenandoah-Loudon terrain. Map 3, drawn for the use of the Second Corps, nicely illustrates this.

The Blue Ridge is shown in considerable detail, as are the ridges in Maryland and into Pennsylvania. But Bull Run Ridge does not appear at all. Obviously Hotchkiss (and Lee) knew about the Bull Run Ridge, but they did not consider this minor topographical feature to be part of "the mountains." This usage continues today. See, for example, the maps in Steven Woodworth's recent book on Gettysburg and in several other authoritative recent books.<sup>7</sup> All these maps simply omit the Bull Run mountain range as a separate physical entity. If Lee and Marshall were looking at a map drawn like map 3 when Stuart's orders were drafted, rather than at the much



MAP 3. The Hotchkiss map of the Loudon Valley. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

larger and more detailed campaign map, the “mountains” Stuart would be east or west of meant the Blue Ridge, along the western edge of the Loudon Valley. The Bull Run Ridge, twenty miles farther east, would not have entered the picture.

Longstreet seems to have understood that Stuart intended the wider eastward swing, since he was the only one who mentioned Hopewell Gap (which is in the Bull Run mountain range), but he also probably expected that once across the Bull Run Ridge, Stu-

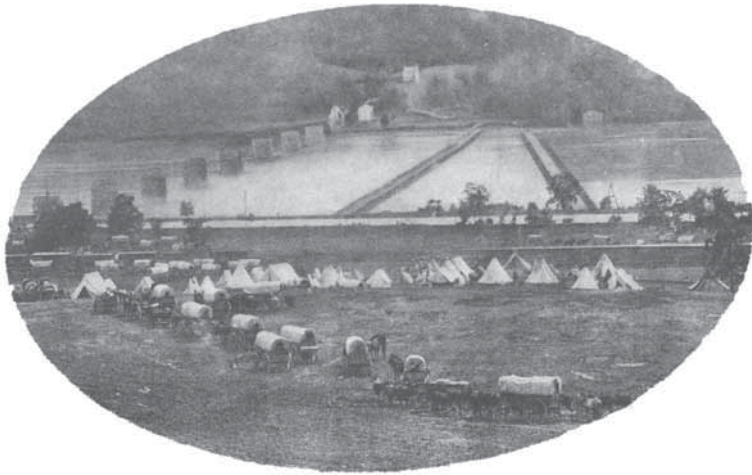


FIGURE 10. The Berlin Potomac ferry crossing at the northern end of the Loudon Valley was used as a crossing point by both sides throughout the war. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

art would cut more or less due north and cross the Potomac near Edwards Ferry. Nothing in any of the communications that flowed back and forth before Stuart finally moved suggests that anyone thought of his movement as a wide swing to the east rather than a scouting and screening movement to the north.

Bowden and Ward take a slightly different tack and argue that Lee expected that Stuart would indeed pass through some of the Federal main force units east of the Bull Run mountain range. Mosby reported that the Federal corps were widely dispersed, so Stuart would be riding around only the two or three closest to the Bull Run Ridge, not the entire army. He would then turn sharply north, cross the river in the vicinity of Leesburg, and move on to Fredericktown.<sup>8</sup>

This is plausible and would have been consistent with Longstreet's speaking of Hopewell Gap. But this route would still not have been as direct as riding straight up the Loudon Valley.

### **Was the Route Directly North Open to Stuart?**

Was the northward route from the Loudon Valley just to the east of the Blue Ridge open to Stuart for crossing the Potomac? This stretch of Maryland at that moment was certainly “behind” Union lines, but these lines were pretty porous. Communications from Washington to Harpers Ferry ran along the river through this area, but this link was not closely guarded. Stuart’s major problem would have been the Union infantry corps transiting it on their way north. But the record of the movement of Union troops in the period June 24 to 27 suggests that Stuart could easily have made it.

Recapping my earlier discussion of the Union movement, on June 24, all the Federal corps were south of the Potomac and east of the Bull Run Ridge. Two pontoon bridges had been laid across the river in the vicinity of Edwards Ferry a few miles east of Leesburg. Hooker ordered the army to move the next day, and by nightfall on June 25 the First, Third, and Eleventh Corps had crossed the river. When they camped for the night, the first two were well east of the Catoctin Mountains, in Barnesville and Poolesville, respectively, but the Eleventh had moved via Point of Rocks to Jefferson, some fifteen miles from Harpers Ferry. (This corps had originally been ordered by Hooker to Sandy Hook, even closer to Harpers Ferry, but these orders were changed almost immediately.) On June 26 three other infantry corps—the Second, the Fifth, and the Twelfth—crossed the river and marched to the Barnesville-Poolesville area. The last elements of the army, the Sixth Corps, crossed on June 27 and moved into the Poolesville area (see map 1).<sup>9</sup>

The Eleventh Corps then moved up the Catoctin Valley to Burkittsville and Turner’s Gap, while the First Corps moved along behind it into Jefferson, at the lower end of the valley. On June 27 the Twelfth Corps moved into the Catoctin Valley to Jefferson, the Eleventh Corps remained at Burkittsville and Turner’s Gap, and the First Corps moved north to Middletown. On June 27 Stahel’s (soon to be Kilpatrick’s) cavalry division crossed the river and joined the First and Eleventh Corps in the Catoctin Valley to scout in the gaps

in the South mountain range. J. H. Kidd's firsthand account of the movements of Custer's brigade has the Federal cavalry in Frederick on June 26 and moving on into the northern end of the Catoctin Valley on June 27.<sup>10</sup>

The reports of the three corps that transited some part of the Catoctin Valley in this period mostly speak of movement from one place to another, with camps made at Middletown, Jefferson, and Frederick. By June 28 all three of the "advance wing" infantry corps—the First, the Eleventh, and the Twelfth—passed over the Catoctin Ridge to rejoin the other corps in the vicinity of Frederick. John Buford's cavalry division, replacing the brigades previously commanded by Julius Stahl but now under Gen. Judson Kilpatrick, guarded the flank and rear of this movement while scouting the Confederate movements up the Cumberland Valley.

The underlying logic of these movements was discussed earlier. Hooker pushed these corps a bit to the west when he was toying with a move against Lee's line of communication up the Cumberland Valley. When this was vetoed by his headquarters, however, the orders were changed, and none of the Federal units appear to have penetrated to the Berlin-Knoxville-Petersville area along the C&O Canal, where Stuart would probably have traveled. Even before Hooker was replaced, these corps were withdrawing to the north and east. The Federal attention was northwestward toward where they knew Lee was, and after the Hooker initiative was dropped, little attention was paid to the extreme southern end of the Catoctin Valley or the Potomac River crossings in the army's rear. The Federal units involved had no reason to do any serious picketing or patrolling along the river such as would have hindered a move by Stuart across the Potomac around Berlin anytime between June 24 and 27. Stuart encountered no pickets at Rowser's Ford, which was considerably closer to Washington.<sup>11</sup>

Once across, Stuart would certainly have run into scouts or skirmishers, since he would have been crossing the line of communication between Harpers Ferry and Washington. But it is not likely

that he would have encountered any substantial Federal force from the main army, either infantry or cavalry, since they were all north and east of his likely route. Gen. William French's contingent, the troops sent from Harpers Ferry to reinforce Gen. George Meade, passed this way, but not until several days after this. Even had Stuart met opposition, he would have been taking the Federals in the rear, with surprise on his side, and he had a strong, unencumbered force that certainly could have forced its way through along the road west, the B&O right-of-way, or the C&O Canal towpath into the Cumberland Valley south and east of Sharpsburg.

Such a move would undoubtedly have startled and alarmed Hooker (or Meade) and led him to slow the movement of the three corps toward Frederick until he was sure what the Confederates were up to along the river. Stuart then would have been doing exactly what Lee and he had discussed in the first place—harrying Hooker's movements while collecting intelligence about the location of the Federal army. When he rejoined the army late on June 27 or 28, he would have brought valuable intelligence about the Union army's movements. He would also have been where Lee expected him to be, screening and scouting on the eastern edge of the South Mountains as the army moved north up the Cumberland Valley.

### **Did Stuart Really Have "No Choice"?**

Another variant of "Stuart had no choice" is that Stuart had to take the extreme route east of the Bull Run mountain range because of congestion on the roads west of Blue Ridge in the Valley. Noah Trudeau writes, "For Stuart's riders, getting to their proper place with Ewell's men would mean having to work their way forward on roads already clogged with columns of infantry and slow wagon trains."<sup>12</sup>

Michael Palmer makes this point even more strongly, quoting the memoirs of Stuart's staff officer William W. Blackford: "All the roads leading northward through the valley were densely filled with the trains of artillery, and quartermaster, commissary and ordinance wagons, to say nothing of the infantry columns."<sup>13</sup>

As we have seen, if Stuart had moved directly north up the Loudon Valley, there would have been no question of congestion on the roads. But even if he had decided to follow the army up the valley on the west of the mountains, the argument against this route does not hold up under close scrutiny. Stuart did not set out from his camp until the morning of the twenty-fifth, and it was in fact a long ride (some sixty miles) through the Blue Ridge to reach Shepherdstown. It would have been sometime about midday on June 26 before he arrived, putting him at the tail of the army, not in the middle of it. Ewell and Hill's men and trains were across long since, and Stuart's three brigades would have been competing with the rear of Longstreet's corps for the crossing. Any delay caused by such congestion would have been minor. Stuart was traveling light, and his entire force could have crossed in an hour or two at most (it took his force only four hours to cross at night at Rowser's Ford under extremely difficult conditions), meaning that he would have reached Maryland the morning of June 27 at the latest and delayed Longstreet's rear division only a few hours, if at all. Stephen Sears dismisses this congestion problem: "Should there be the threat of congestion at the Shepherdstown Potomac crossing, a short detour would take the cavalry to Williamsport, one of Ewell's earlier crossing points."<sup>14</sup>

Once across the river, there were several roads to choose among. Within half a day, Stuart would have been somewhere along the mountains north and east of Sharpsburg, scouting toward Middletown and Frederick, where he would have encountered the advance guard of the Union forces, which had crossed at Edwards Ferry two days earlier. By late afternoon of June 27 he should have been in touch with Lee with his first report that the Union army was across the river.

Palmer's recent, and in many ways excellent, book on Gettysburg and other Virginia campaigns contains a puzzling discussion of these matters: "If Stuart had been able to cross at Shepherdstown on the 26th, and had he continued on to Frederick in an effort to 'feel' for Ewell's right flank, the Rebel cavalry would have encoun-

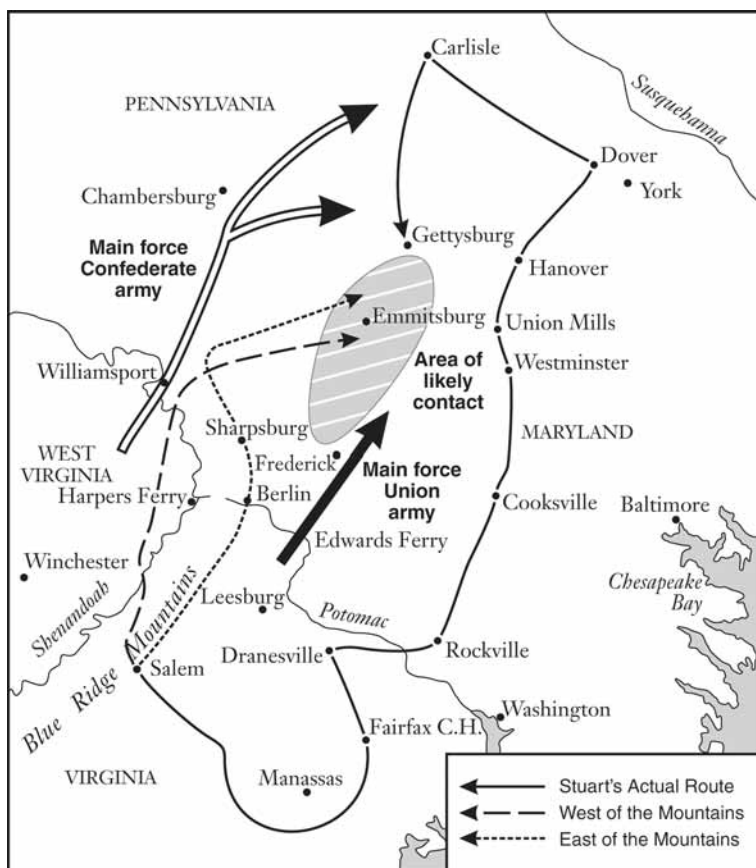


tered the Federal troops which arrived there on the 27th. Despite Lee's assertions, it was impossible for Stuart, positioned as he was, to have discovered the initial Federal crossing of the Potomac on June 25th, although Lee might have learned of the Federal advance into Maryland perhaps a half a day earlier than he actually did."<sup>15</sup> Lee's report, in fact, asserted nothing about when Stuart should have learned about Hooker's crossing the river, but obviously Lee did assume that one of Stuart's ongoing responsibilities was to keep him informed promptly of such enemy movements.

Palmer also suggests that Lee erred in putting Albert Jenkins's cavalry on the left of the advance, rather than on the right. In fact, John Imboden was on the left flank, while Jenkins was in the van. Jenkins did end up moving to the right with Early into York. However, Jenkins was well north of Gettysburg, and leaving aside the quality of his scouting reports, he could hardly have been expected to know what was going on at the crossings of the Potomac.

Had Stuart crossed directly north of the Loudon Valley, he very likely would have been encountering the Federal troops on the right flank of Lee's army, which was exactly what he was supposed to do. Stuart would presumably have skirmished with them, discovered who they were and where they were going, and reported this to Lee. Lee did not hear the report of Longstreet's spy, James Harrison, until the night of June 28 and did not fully trust it. He was still waiting to hear from Stuart, and it was the twenty-ninth before he began to react to the news and concentrate his army. Had Stuart made his first contact with the enemy sometime on June 26 and reported this on June 27, Lee would have learned what he needed to know and started his preparations for the coming battle a full two days earlier. And two days—even one day—would have given him time to concentrate his army and position it for the coming battle. Napoleon once said, "The loss of time is irreparable in war . . . strategy is the art of making use of time and space. I am less chary of the latter than of the former; space we can recover, time never."<sup>16</sup>

The Confederate experience at Gettysburg proves this Napoleonic point once again.



MAP 4. Stuart's possible routes north

### The Three Routes Open to Stuart

In sum, Stuart had two other choices that did not involve riding around the Union rear, one west and one east of the Blue Ridge. Map 4 indicates the two alternative routes compared with the route Stuart actually followed.

How long each of the routes would have taken Stuart in the actual event is impossible to know exactly, but we can make an estimate. From Stuart's camp at Salem (where he had moved from Rector's

Crossroads on June 24) it was a forty-five-mile ride to the crossing at Shepherdstown and another fifty miles up the Cumberland Valley to the rear echelon of Ewell's corps. The route straight up the Loudon Valley would have brought him to the Potomac in some thirty miles, and thirty miles after that he would have been at the southernmost gap in the South mountain range. How rapidly even cavalry could move was variable, depending on the condition of the men and animals and, of course, the presence or absence of enemy opposition. On the 1862 raid around McClellan, Stuart had made eighty miles in a single day, but this was exceptional. The Confederate infantry had made numerous marches of thirty miles in a day, and forty miles in an unopposed day was certainly a manageable pace for cavalry.<sup>17</sup>

Taking the route to the west of the mountains via Shepherdstown, Stuart might have required three days to reach the right flank of the main body in the Cumberland Valley. Taking the Loudon Valley route east of the mountains, Stuart should have been able to attain the desired position in two days, with much depending on whether he encountered serious opposition once he was on the northern side of the Potomac. In other words, the western route might have taken a day longer than the one east of the mountains, but either one would have worked, and even if he did not leave until June 25, he would have been where Lee wanted him to be by late on June 27.

It is worth noting also that the originally planned third route, Mosby's route through the Union army (not shown on map 4), could not have, under the most favorable conditions, gained him any time on the march north. Even if the Union army had remained static and Stuart had passed through it unharmed, Seneca Ford was a good forty miles from Stuart's starting point. Frederick was thirty miles beyond that, and it was another forty miles to the first pass through the Catoctins by which Stuart could have made contact with the army. This route also involved the river crossing, and even with the Federals not in motion he would have been facing some opposition.

Looking plainly at what Stuart and Mosby hoped to do makes clear what an incredibly bold and risky gamble was involved in the route they were proposing to take. The “gaps” between the Union corps were indeed several miles wide, but they almost certainly were picketed and patrolled. Stuart would have been detected by the time he reached Haymarket and would have been in the middle of three Union corps. The Union troop dispositions were dense all the way from the Bull Run Ridge to the Potomac, and skirmishes and a running fight would have been inevitable, slowing him down and turning his intended crossing of the Potomac into a trap by the time he reached it. Mosby and a small band of guerrillas “slipping through” a gap in the Union lines was one thing, but three brigades of cavalry complete with artillery were quite another. This route certainly would have required at least two or three days, and perhaps much longer still.

As matters unfolded, Stuart followed a totally different route, unanticipated by any of his orders. Mosby himself made a judgment through his actions rather than his words as to which route Stuart should have followed in the face of the “hindrance” he encountered. When it became clear that he and Stuart would not be able to meet at Gum Springs and cross at Seneca Ford, Mosby recrossed both the Bull Run Ridge and the Blue Ridge, crossed the river near Martinsburg, and looked for Stuart in western Maryland. He wrote, “I supposed that Stuart had retired and I concluded that he had gone back and I did the same.”<sup>18</sup>

Not finding Stuart, he raided as far north as Mercersburg before retiring to Virginia, having played no useful role in the campaign. Evidently it never occurred to Mosby that Stuart would turn even farther south and east to carry out the raid. Stuart was bolder than Mosby, his alter ego.

It is clear that Stuart did have a choice to make about which route to take on his way north and that he chose (or at any rate actually followed) a route totally different from any of those discussed by Lee, Longstreet, or even Mosby.

## 7. Stuart's Conduct of the Ride North

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Stuart had his orders by the night of June 23, but it was a full day later before he left. The units going with him were somewhat scattered, and he needed to assemble his party. Several weeks of hard use and constant engagement had left Stuart's horses and men in poor shape, and he felt obliged to rest and graze his horses in camp near Salem for the whole day of June 24. Lee was unaware of this need for delay.<sup>1</sup> Stuart did not finally set off until very early on the morning of June 25. Stuart's position was toward the south end of the Loudon Valley, just east of the Bull Run Ridge. He was counting on finding the Union corps dispersed along the eastern slopes of the Bull Run mountain range as Mosby had last reported them. On June 19, Hooker reported their positions: "My corps tonight are as follows, Twelfth, Slocum, Leesburg; Eleventh, Howard, on Goose Creek, 4 miles from Leesburg, toward Aldie; Fifth, Meade, at Aldie; First, Reynolds, at Herndon Station and vicinity; Third, Birney, at Gum Springs; Second, Hancock, at Centreville; Sixth, Sedgwick, at Germantown; Pleasonton rests his cavalry at Aldie."<sup>2</sup>

Their disposition did seem to favor the Mosby plan. McClellan relates that Mosby "submitted to General Stuart, on the 23rd, a plan of crossing the Bull Run Mountain and of passing through the centre of Hooker's Army in Loudon and Fairfax Counties."<sup>3</sup> The intended route was east through Glasscock's Gap in the Bull

Run Mountains to Haymarket, then north through Gum Springs, passing east of Leesburg to Dranesville and crossing the Potomac at Seneca Ford, well west of Fredericktown (Frederick). He would have been passing "around" the bivouacs of the Second Corps at Haymarket, the Third Corps at Herndon, and the First Corps at Dranesville. For the first forty miles of his route, the first day's ride, Stuart would have been passing through the center of the Union army. Truly this would have been a ride "through," not "around," the enemy. Had Longstreet and Lee understood that Stuart's intended route was right through the heart of the Union army, they could not have agreed to such a risky venture. Stuart's earlier raids had been around the Union army, from one flank to the other, skirting the main force, and Lee's orders in those cases had been full of cautionary phrases and limitations. But this raid was cut from entirely different cloth. Mosby had sold Stuart on a truly bold gamble.

On June 25, early in the morning, he rode east through Glasscock's Gap, the southernmost pass in the Bull Run mountain range, heading toward Haymarket. At about noon the van of the column encountered substantial enemy infantry columns on the main road north to the Potomac. This was Hancock's Second Corps marching to Edwards Ferry. Mosby had been sent ahead the previous day to scout but had given no warning of any changed circumstances. Having heard nothing from Mosby, Stuart was perplexed, and after some pointless shelling of the Union troops, he fell back toward the mountains and camped near Buckland. Two days had now passed since Lee had given him his orders, and Stuart was almost back where he had started.

Stuart set out again on June 26, and once again his scouts encountered a Union column, this time the rear of the Sixth Corps moving north from Manassas. This time Stuart pushed on, but he was forced south as well as east to get around the marching Federals. Stuart does not seem to have hesitated about his detour, and he did not discuss it with any of his staff or subordinate commanders. The route he ended up taking led, very much by hit-or-miss, through Bristoe Station and

Brentsville, across Wolf Run Shoals on the Occoquan, and to camp near Bull Run on the night of June 26. He did indeed nimbly avoid the much larger Union units moving around him, but “danger was ever present”<sup>4</sup> as he rode through the still-smoldering campfires of the Union infantry corps. The need to cautiously pick his way cost time. On June 27 he moved on through Annandale, scattered a small Union cavalry detachment at Fairfax Court House, captured the major Union supply dump there, then stopped for several hours to replenish his supplies and feed and rest horses and men.

### **The Lost Dispatch to Lee**

Stuart (and McClellan) reported after the campaign that Stuart sent a courier to Lee with a message, written by Stuart himself and unread by anyone else, informing him of the Union army’s move north. The message never arrived, and this is a puzzling further footnote to these events. Presumably the messenger was one of Stuart’s regular dispatch riders. Did he ever turn up later, and what was his story? By what route was he instructed to travel in search of Lee? Col. Charles Marshall’s memoirs report that, after the battle, Stuart told him the dispatch rider was sent via Ashby’s Gap in the Blue Ridge.<sup>5</sup>

One thing we can immediately judge by this story. If Stuart knew a route by which the dispatch rider could reach Lee more quickly than Stuart was going to, this is further evidence that Stuart knew he was heading off on his own and was not going to rejoin Lee for some time. It seems curious that all accounts of these events, including ones written soon after, ignored this “lost message,” which might be as important in its consequences as the famous lost order before Antietam.

It is also unclear exactly when this message was sent. Stuart’s report mentions the dispatch just after reporting that he had found his intended route through Haymarket blocked by the Federals, but he does not give a date or time to the event. McClellan likewise states that he saw Stuart write the dispatch and that it was indeed sent,

but he provides no further particulars. In fact, perhaps the "lost" message to Lee was not really lost after all. Longacre first called attention to the fact that, after the fight near Fairfax Court House, "Stuart sent a message informing General Lee of his victory, one that failed to reach its destination, though a copy somehow reached the War Department in Richmond."<sup>6</sup>

Longacre's source is the diary kept by Richmond War Department clerk John B. Jones. This entry is worth quoting in its entirety: "Headquarters Cavalry Division, June 27, 1863. General: I took possession of Fairfax C.H. this morning at nine o'clock, together with a large quantity of stores. The main body of Hooker's army has gone toward Leesburg, except for the garrisons of Alexandria and Washington, which have retreated within the fortifications. Yours respectfully, your obedient servant, J. E. B. Stuart, Major-General."<sup>7</sup>

Stuart made no mention of a second dispatch to Lee in his own report, nor did McClellan. This "second" dispatch is ignored in most accounts of Stuart's raid.

But this presents a further puzzle. Why would Stuart have bothered sending a report of a minor skirmish to the army commander then many miles away if he had just written to him a day or two earlier?

Even more puzzling is Stuart's wording, for the message reports that Hooker is moving toward Leesburg, not that Hooker is crossing the Potomac and moving into Maryland. But if this was a second message, he had already informed Lee in his first message that Hooker was crossing the Potomac on June 25. These questions suggest an interesting and plausible explanation of the fate of the "missing" message. The message that survived in the War Department archives was probably the first and only one Stuart sent to Lee informing him of anything. Intent as he was on the raid and frustrated by the hindrances he had encountered, Stuart may well have decided not to inform Lee of the new turn of events until he had some accomplishment to report. Looting the Union depot in



Fairfax Court House would certainly qualify as a triumph for a raid, and Stuart could boast a bit. But this message was not all that helpful as a scouting report, since it still did not definitely tell Lee that Hooker had crossed the Potomac or what his line of march and intentions were. Indeed, Stuart could not tell Lee much, because he did not know much himself. Finding Hooker's army on the move on June 25, he did a little pointless shelling of the Union column but captured no prisoners, so he actually learned very little except that part of the Union army was on the move. Intent on making his way around the Union forces, he probed no further but bounced off the enemy columns and moved around them to continue his move eastward. Had he sent a message on June 25, he would have had very little to report to Lee.

This message may have been "lost" to history because it was so irrelevant and unhelpful. If we accept this scenario, Stuart's messenger did not leave Fairfax Court House until June 27 and had to travel back through both the Bull Run and Blue Ridge mountain passes, then all the way up the Shenandoah and Cumberland valleys to find Lee somewhere around Chambersburg, nearly 150 miles in all. If he ever arrived at all, it could not have been before June 30, by which time Lee already knew of the Federal army's northward movement from Longstreet's scout. The message would have been superfluous by that point, and this would explain why no special note was taken of it by Lee or his staff. Lee or Marshall may have never seen the message under the press of other events, though it was sent routinely to the War Department in Richmond. This is all conjecture, but it makes considerable sense.<sup>8</sup>

### **Stuart's Ride to the Suburbs of Washington**

Finding no further Federal opposition, Stuart turned west and north through Hunters Mill and Dranesville, where local sympathizers directed him to Rowser's Ford on the Potomac. Stuart had to abandon his plan to rendezvous with Mosby at Gum Springs and was unsure where to cross the river. After scouting the bank in the



FIGURE 11. Rowser's Ford as it appears today. The bottom is still rocky, but kayakers frequently launch here. Courtesy of Matthew M. Robinson.

dark, he settled on Rowser's Ford, a rocky and difficult crossing known to local residents that did not even appear on most maps. It was here that his troopers made their crossing on the night of the June 28. The river had risen because of recent rains, which made for a difficult, time-consuming crossing. "No more difficult achievement was accomplished by the cavalry during the war," according to McClellan.<sup>9</sup> Meade informed Henry Halleck of Stuart's crossing on June 28, misidentifying the leader as "Fitzhugh Lee,"<sup>10</sup> and promised to send two brigades of cavalry in pursuit. Early on June 28 Stuart destroyed enemy property on several C&O Canal barges and allowed a rest stop there, moving on at about midday.

Once across the river, Stuart had to decide which direction to proceed in. Judging by his dispatch to Lee from Fairfax, he may or may not have known that the main body of the Union army had also crossed the river and was to his north, but he certainly knew that Lee had crossed to the west of him, farther up the river. In

fact, at this point Stuart was some eighty miles southeast of the Confederate army. Had he turned northwest, he could reasonably have expected to overtake the rear of Lee's army somewhere in the lower part of the Cumberland Valley. Admittedly there would be a danger of running into some of the Union forces en route, but Stuart's mission included disrupting the enemy's march. Instead, Stuart deliberately turned farther east and made for the suburbs of the city. In Rockville, he ran into a Union army wagon train of supplies heading from Washington, pursued and captured most of the train, and penetrated as far as the northern suburbs of Washington. This would have been the second time in the war that Stuart gazed from afar at the unfinished dome of the capitol, the first being when his pickets reached the southern bank of the Potomac after First Bull Run. The rest of that day was spent collecting his stragglers, dealing with enemy prisoners, and reorganizing the column to include the captured supply wagons. Stuart's report on this incident also gives an insight into what he viewed as the main objective of his ride:

The capture and securing of this train had for the time scattered the leading brigade. I calculated that before the next brigade could march this distance and reach the defenses of Washington, it would have been after dark; the troops there would have had time to march to position to meet an attack on this road. To attack with cavalry at night, particularly unless certain of surprise, would have been extremely hazardous; to wait till morning would have lost much time from my march to join General Lee without the probability of compensating results. I therefore decided, after getting the wagons underway, to proceed directly north.<sup>11</sup>

Stuart suggests that had he thought it was possible—had he had more daylight or had the next brigade been close enough—he might very well have attempted a penetration of the defenses of Washington itself. Time was a factor, but he was weighing the relative advantages of prolonging his raid compared with moving north to rejoin the army. This casual comment speaks volumes about Stuart's mind-set.



FIGURE 12. The 125 Union supply wagons Stuart captured in Rockville must have resembled this one. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

### **The Long March North**

On June 29 the column marched slowly all night, arriving at the B&O Railroad main line west of Baltimore, where a brief fight ensued with a small enemy cavalry force. Stuart spent that afternoon tearing up track and destroying railroad equipment before he moved on to Westminster, where a Union cavalry detachment (from the First Delaware) put up a stiff fight before being all but wiped out. By 5:00 p.m. Stuart was in possession of the town, and he overnighted there. On June 30 he moved on, but he took time to stop for several hours for breakfast at the home of a family of Confederate sympathizers in Union Mills (which included the inevitable

songfest around his host's piano). His scouts reported a large enemy force at Littletown, directly in his path, forcing a detour to the east. In spite of the detour, Stuart encountered a strong Union cavalry force in Hanover—elements of one of two brigades of Kilpatrick's division serving as the right flank screen for the main Union army. A sharp clash ensued back and forth through the town, and Stuart himself once again had a narrow escape. He had his three brigades spread out to serve as escorts for the wagon train (which stretched several miles on the road), and it was difficult for him to quickly assemble them to fight as a cohesive group.

The action consumed the rest of the day and led to a further detour to Jefferson, before the troops turned north again toward York. On July 1 Stuart's column rode through most of the night, and horses and men were increasingly tired out. Stuart evidently obtained news from local newspapers that Confederates had been in York two days earlier but were now gone. He concluded that they must have turned west, and he thus moved to Dover, arriving on the morning of July 1, where he allowed the column to rest for several hours. He reached Carlisle in the early evening of July 1, to find it occupied by a force of enemy infantry (under Gen. W. F. Smith, comprising two brigades of second-line Pennsylvania reserves), and attempted to negotiate their surrender. Smith refused, and Stuart spent several hours shelling the town and military barracks, to no avail. Shortly after this, he finally made contact with the main army.

### **The Course of the March**

Many things conspired to delay Stuart: the need at the outset to rest his horses and men a day; the necessity of the long detour literally around the Union army rather than through it, since it was on the march; the difficult fording of the river, made worse by an unexpected rising of the water level owing to the recent heavy rains; the lack of proper tools for disrupting the rail lines they crossed; the capture of the wagons and Stuart's decision to bring them back to the army (McClellan considered this capture "a misfortune," since



FIGURE 13. Stuart's cavalry on the march, moving through Chambersburg in 1862. His march north in 1863 must have led to many similar scenes. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

without this encumbrance he estimated that Stuart would have been back in touch with Lee by June 30); the stout resistance put up by small rear echelon units along the route; the serious, near-fatal encounter with the Union cavalry at Hanover; and the stubborn defense of Carlisle by General Smith. Stuart seems to have failed to take into account that he would be moving continuously through hostile territory, that his captured wagon train would prove such a burden, or that the long forced march would fatigue both horses and men so greatly.

When one reads the day-by-day account of the ride, the picture that emerges is that Stuart did not seem to be always concerned about moving as fast as possible. He allowed his men to loot the stores at Fairfax Station. He rested the men and animals for half a day after crossing the Potomac. There was time to pursue and capture the Federal wagons, feast on their contents, outfit them with drivers, and flirt with the girls from a ladies' seminary nearby; time





FIGURE 14. The Hanover Junction railroad bridge. Stuart's men damaged but failed to destroy this B&O Railroad bridge near Hanover. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

to take prisoners and do the paperwork of paroling some of them; time to force small enemy units to surrender rather than bypassing them; time to allow a formal burial of two of his slain officers; time for a leisurely breakfast with hospitable sympathizers; and time to shell Carlisle Barracks and consider storming it.<sup>12</sup> Stuart conducted his raid with flair, in his own style.

Stuart made his own invasion of the North and waged a small-scale campaign of his own, totally unconnected with the activity of the main army. As Emory Thomas has observed in his generally favorable biography of Stuart: "As he rode through enemy country, he seemed to see only the road on which he was, when he should have been seeing a map of Pennsylvania."<sup>13</sup>

Even given that bad luck forced Stuart to change his plans and that this was the most important cause of his prolonged absence from the army, it is also clear that his conduct reflected no sense of urgency about rejoining the main army. As the raid unfolded, a pattern developed. Stuart spent the days fighting, skirmishing, and visiting with local supporters, then moved slowly north by night. For five of the last eight nights on the road, his command rode through the night. In a few days his men and horses were virtually spent. When he did rejoin the army, his command was in such poor shape that men were falling out of their saddles.<sup>14</sup>

In the end he was forced to travel nearly a hundred miles due north before he could turn west again and rejoin Lee in Gettysburg on July 2. The ride covered a total of 210 miles in eight days, for an average of twenty-six miles a day. The raid exhausted Stuart's command, accomplished nothing of consequence except for capturing the famous 125 wagons, and gathered no useful intelligence about enemy movements. Thomas puts it very well: "Compare Stuart's action on this expedition with his conduct of the Dumfries or Chambersburg or Catlett's Station raids. In contrast to the rare blend of prudent audacity Stuart had displayed on former occasions, this time he has been both timid and careless. The man who had all but defined the art of reconnaissance had managed to lose two very large armies, his friends and his foes, within a relatively small area . . . something was dreadfully wrong."<sup>15</sup>

In a later work,<sup>16</sup> Thomas attempts to answer his own question about "what was wrong" with Stuart by arguing that Stuart "was long-term tired before the campaign even began. Stuart then became exhausted to the point of dysfunction as his exertions and stress only increased during the long march toward battle."<sup>17</sup>

This is based on some peculiar—rude and uncharacteristic—behavior on Stuart's part. Obviously such personal physical or psychological elements may have entered into the way events unfolded, but it is not clear how Stuart apparently recovered himself well enough to play an outstanding role in the retreat to the Potomac after Get-



tyzburg. The intervening days could hardly have been restful either. If he was long-term tired before Gettysburg, he should have been more tired on July 5 or 6.

### **The Rendezvous in York**

Stuart's account has it that he was to rejoin the army, in the person of Early and his division, in York. ("He had reason to expect me and had been directed to look out for me.") As has been pointed out, nowhere in any surviving order (to Stuart, Ewell, or Early) does Lee speak of such a meeting, much less of York as a "rally point," and Early denied any such "understanding" with Stuart. Where Stuart got his notion of York is, then, an interesting question. The most likely answer is that Stuart had hoped, with no real reason, to run into the van of the army in that vicinity. Much later Stuart discovered that Early had been in York a few days before him, and thus Early would have been his presumed point of contact. Had there been an understanding that Early failed to honor, then Early would be at least partly to blame for not waiting for Stuart or at least sending scouts to look for him.

Even the minor factual details of Stuart's report raise questions about its veracity. Freeman points out that Stuart stated he learned of Early's earlier movements in the York area from local newspapers on June 28, but in fact no such accounts were printed until after Stuart had left the area on June 29.<sup>18</sup>

The entire business about a meeting in York seems a retrospective self-justification on Stuart's part, which McClellan further embellished. That Stuart later claimed he thought it reasonable that the army would march all the way across Maryland and into Pennsylvania before he made contact with it means he was so intent on his raid that he really did not read all of his orders.

### **Stuart Rejoins the Army**

There is some disagreement about exactly how contact between Stuart and the main army was reestablished. Blackford's account



FIGURE 15. Carlisle barracks, defended by Pennsylvania militia, refused to surrender to Stuart in spite of intense shelling. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

has it that late on July 1, Maj. Andrew Venable and Capt. Henry Lee of Stuart's staff found Ewell's headquarters north of Gettysburg and were informed of Lee's whereabouts.<sup>19</sup> Ewell briefed Venable, informing him of the situation of the main body of the army and telling him that Lee's orders were for Stuart to rejoin it via Heidlersburg and Hunterstown.

Stuart's own account in his report differs slightly: "During the night [of July 1] I received a dispatch from General Lee (in answer to one sent by Major Venable from Dover, on Early's trail) that the army was at Gettysburg."<sup>20</sup>

Another account, by Maj. Campbell Brown of Ewell's staff, has it that, acting on orders from Lee to search for Stuart, Brown did so and found him. "I was instructed to take a courier or two. Ride to the left until I found Stuart or some general of cavalry, ascertain from them the movements of the enemy . . . and then report in person. All this I did, finding Stuart himself."<sup>21</sup>

Burke Davis also cites two other accounts of how Stuart and Lee were reunited. "John W. Dubose . . . says Lee sent twenty scouts

after Stuart; Edwin Selvage says he and eight cavalymen led Stuart to the field."<sup>22</sup>

Shelby Foote has it a different way still. "One welcome interruption there was, in the form of a pair of Stuart's troopers who brought word to Seminary Ridge of the skirmish near Hanover the day before . . . and the subsequent decision to push on to Carlisle . . . relieved to learn that Jeb had managed to avoid personal disaster . . . Lee told the horsemen to ride the thirty miles north at once, with orders for the cavalry to rejoin the army as soon as possible."<sup>23</sup>

As was his wont, Foote gives no source or documentation for this, but he relied heavily on Freeman's account of these events in his biography of Lee, and there is in fact a terse statement to the same effect in an appendix to Freeman's second volume of *R. E. Lee*. Thus: "As for the cavalry, Jenkins' brigade was close at hand, and word had been received—at last!—from Stuart. He was at Carlisle, whither messengers had been sent to hurry his march."<sup>24</sup>

It is even possible that all these "sightings" occurred. Stuart had been within a half-day's ride of Lee's main body for three days, and it was remarkable that they missed each other all that time. Indeed, one is tempted to say that had Stuart been scouting with his usual aggressiveness, he would have discovered when he was in Hanover that he was twenty miles due east of Lee and rejoined the army three days earlier than he did.

In any event, Stuart moved ahead of the main body, arriving at Lee's headquarters the evening of July 2. However, Wade Hampton and the main body encountered Union cavalry again at Hunterstown and had to fight another sharp action before proceeding, still encumbered by the wagon train. It was late on the second before the last of Stuart's force camped near Gettysburg, horses and men exhausted and ammunition stocks low.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Meeting Between Lee and Stuart**

We will never be certain exactly what Lee said to Stuart when they finally met on July 2 on the outskirts of Gettysburg. Two versions

exist of what passed between them. One—which may be called the kinder, gentler version—has Lee uttering a mild rebuke: “Well, General Stuart, you are here at last.” This version first appears in the literature in the 1930 John Thomason biography of Stuart, which, being the first such work, became a source for many later writers.<sup>26</sup> Douglas Southall Freeman lent his considerable authority to this version and cited Thomason. Unfortunately, Thomason gives no reference or source for the conversation.

A second, much sharper version is contained in Burke Davis’s 1957 biography of Stuart. Lee “reddened at the sight of Stuart and raised his arm as if he would strike him.” Lee reportedly said, “General Stuart, where have you been? I have not heard a word from you for days and you the eyes and ears of my army.” Stuart is said to have “wilted” and attempted to explain himself, only to be cut off by Lee with, “We will not discuss the matter longer.” Davis’s source is the diary of Anne Bachman Hyde, who was quoting the recollection of Henry B. McClellan, an aide to Stuart and one of the only persons present at the incident. McClellan remembered it as “painful” to see. Davis found this account persuasive,<sup>27</sup> and it is certainly consistent with the fact that Lee, who hardly ever criticized his subordinates, felt strongly enough about the matter to state flatly in his official report that the “absence of the cavalry” hindered his movement into Pennsylvania.

### **Lee’s Report and Stuart’s Reaction**

Lee’s very closeness to Stuart probably led him to conclude that he could not “cover up” for Stuart, any more than he would have for one of his own sons. But the indictment of Stuart in his official account of the Gettysburg campaign is implicit, not explicit, and does not even mention him by name. According to Marshall, his first draft of the report contained a much more severe account of Stuart’s absence, but Lee edited this out, explaining that were he to be so officially critical of Stuart, he would be obliged to relieve him of command and bring him up on charges so that he would have the

opportunity to defend himself. After the war, Marshall claimed he had urged this course of action but Lee declined.<sup>28</sup>

Even this implied rebuke was too much for Stuart's ego, and his own report was, in effect, a rebuttal to his commanding officer. But in truth Stuart's entire account of this campaign, beginning with Brandy Station, is full of factual errors and self-serving misinterpretations. Even his own men were astonished by the report. Hampton, writing to Tom Mumford, well after the battle, said, "Lately, I saw for the first time Stuart's report of the Gettysburg campaign and I never read a more erroneous—to call it no harsher name—one than it was."<sup>29</sup>

His biographer Emory Thomas says flatly: "Stuart's report/apologia was indeed unfortunate. It contained even more fantasy than his report on Brandy Station. Stuart's pretensions and prevarications compounded his errors in the Gettysburg campaign."<sup>30</sup>

One gets a taste of this with the comment Stuart wrote in a letter after the battle of Gettysburg: "We got the better of the fight at Gettysburg, but retired because the position we took could not be held."<sup>31</sup>

Lee actually wrote two reports to Jefferson Davis on the campaign, the first at the end of July and a somewhat more detailed one some months later. They do not differ in any important way in their treatment of the role of Stuart and the cavalry. Neither contains an indictment of Stuart or, indeed, an effort to assign blame to anyone. Lee stated the obvious: the army would have been better off with the cavalry in its proper place. One might even see in the statement an implied acceptance of his own responsibility. He simply had forgotten about Stuart's underlying rashness and not been precise enough in his orders. It is also interesting that Lee had to read and pass on Stuart's account of the campaign for the official record and that he allowed Stuart's selective, self-justifying version to see the light of day. Marshall reports discussing Stuart's report with him while it was still in draft.<sup>32</sup> Evidently Lee thought Stuart had a right to make out his own case, but Lee simply stated the facts as he saw

them. Stuart and his partisans have been overreacting to Lee's statement of fact ever since. The really sharp criticisms of Stuart came from Marshall and from the Richmond press. Lee can scarcely be blamed for the newspaper accounts or the postwar versions of Marshall and other of his staff officers.

## 8. The Battle as It Unfolded

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By June 28 Lee had not heard from Stuart for five days and must have been growing apprehensive. Stuart had never been out of touch this long. Yet, as Lee pointed out in his report on the battle, hearing nothing from Stuart to the contrary, he felt justified in thinking that Gen. Joseph Hooker had not moved; if he had, Stuart surely would have warned the army. Lee no doubt thought Stuart would turn up soon with a full report.<sup>1</sup>

Otherwise the campaign was going according to plan. The army was well launched on its march into the heart of the Union. The advance corps, commanded by Gen. Richard Ewell, stood on the banks of the Susquehanna. York had fallen, and Harrisburg was threatened. Lee had his staff draw up orders for the attack on Harrisburg and prepared to move the rest of army out of the Cumberland Valley onto the broad plain of south-central Pennsylvania. The only immediate opposition facing the advance was militia and rear-echelon units that the army could easily brush aside.

In reality, unknown to Lee, the entire Union Army of the Potomac—seven corps of infantry, three cavalry divisions, and supporting artillery and supply units—was across the Potomac and rapidly moving north. As was discussed earlier, Hooker had designated three infantry corps (the First, the Eleventh, and the Twelfth) as the advance wing, under Gen. John Reynolds, intending to move them into the lower end of the Cumberland Valley as a threat to

Lee's rear. When Gen. George Meade assumed command of the army this idea was scrapped, and Reynolds received new orders to move north, staying well east of the mountains while his cavalry watched the passes for any movement in this direction by Lee. This advance wing was only a day's march from Lee; three additional Union corps were a day behind that, and the rear corps was still another day away. Meade knew Lee's position and was pursuing Lee, but cautiously.

Lee's situation and his state of mind changed dramatically on the night of June 28. James Longstreet's spy James Harrison found the army and reported to Longstreet that Hooker had crossed the Potomac and was moving north. Later the same night Harrison repeated his report to Lee himself. Lee distrusted such irregular intelligence and questioned Longstreet about Harrison's reliability.<sup>2</sup> The report was nevertheless disquieting, and there was still no word from Stuart to confirm or refute the spy's story. The main Union force might be many miles away, still crossing the Potomac, or well east of him guarding the approaches to Washington. But if Harrison was correct, it might be just over the ridges, gathering itself to pounce on him. Lee now feared something like the move against his rear that Hooker had wanted to make some days earlier. More important perhaps, the Union army was now commanded by Meade, whom Lee respected far more than he had Hooker. In short, Lee's plan for the campaign seemed to have gone seriously awry.

Lee did not know what he was up against, but prudence dictated caution. Soon after receiving the spy's report, Lee sent word calling off the attack on Harrisburg and ordering Ewell's scattered corps to countermarch back down the valley and rejoin the other two corps in the Chambersburg-Fayette area.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps a battle was in the offing and consolidation of the army was a necessary precaution. With the benefit of hindsight, Lee's caution in recalling Ewell from the Susquehanna and concentrating his army around Chambersburg was certainly the right decision, for



the whole Union army was in fact moving north, only a day or two's march behind him. Meade was intent on shielding Washington and Baltimore should Lee turn to the east, but he would have been in a position to attack had Lee's army remained scattered (and had he decided to do so).

This decision to consolidate the army shows Lee's generalship at its best. He was a gambler, but he calculated his gambles carefully. He still did not know with certainty that Meade was close enough to pose a threat, and Ewell was on the verge of scoring a major Confederate triumph: the capture of Harrisburg, a major northern city and a state capital. Lee must have been sorely tempted to gamble a bit further and allow the advance to go on one more day to score such a victory. But his army was divided—scattered, in fact—and at great risk should Meade be nearby and move decisively. It threatened to be Antietam all over again. So Lee took the conservative course of concentrating his forces and hunkering down where he was while waiting for Stuart to arrive and tell him what was going on. The absence of an accurate, current scouting report on the enemy was the missing element for Lee. Fitzhugh Lee put the situation very well in one of his postwar writings: "It is evident that General Stuart was ordered to give information of the enemy's crossing the Potomac, or why else did General Lee loiter after crossing his army and wait to hear from him?"<sup>4</sup>

Lee waited for two days in Chambersburg to get definitive intelligence from Stuart regarding the location and movements of the Federal army before making his next move. Lee was acting out a dictum of Henri de Jomini's: "How can any man decide what he should do himself, if he is ignorant of what his enemy is about."<sup>5</sup>

### **Lee Consolidates the Army**

Lee might have consolidated the army behind Ewell at the upper end of the Cumberland Valley and attacked Harrisburg. Meade would have pursued, particularly after an attack on Harrisburg, and Lee would have been waiting for him. Had Lee taken this course,

the ultimate battle would have taken place on the banks of the Susquehanna, somewhere in the Harrisburg-York area. (As I shall discuss in a later chapter, some writers believe this is what Lee intended all along.)

But this would have been the more dangerous course for Lee, since it would have put him deeper into enemy territory and further stretched his communication and supply lines to the south. His concern about the location of the Federal army probably argued against this course.

In a second message to Ewell, sent after Lee or one of his staff had studied the map, Lee suggested an alternative routing. Instead of marching back down the Cumberland Valley, Ewell could stay east of the ridges and come to the Chambersburg area by less-crowded roads. This second order reached Ewell after he had already started his corps supply train and Edward Johnson's division back down the valley toward Carlisle, but he was able to redirect Jubal Early and Robert Rodes along an alternative road east of the ridges through Hueblersville.<sup>6</sup> This route was suggested because it would relieve congestion on the road leading down the valley. The second order was too late to altogether prevent such congestion at a crucial later stage for Johnson's division, and the corps train did end up competing with A. P. Hill's corps on the afternoon of July 1 for the use of the single road leading from Chambersburg to Gettysburg.

When Lee issued his orders to Ewell, however, he was simply consolidating his army in the most efficient manner possible given the road network. He was not thinking in terms of dispositions for a battle, for he still had no real reason to think one was impending. His position in Chambersburg was good, and with his army tightly consolidated, he would wait there for developments and, perhaps above all, until he finally heard from Stuart.

But as the battle did unfold, it became clear that Lee's initial deployments were unfortunate. Had Johnson also followed a route east of the ridges, he would have left the Chambersburg-Gettysburg road clear for Hill and provided added weight to the attack by Early

and Rodes on the Union First and Eleventh Corps west and north of Gettysburg on the first day of the fight. To quote Helmuth von Moltke, another of the military immortals, "Mistakes in preliminary deployment are always difficult to correct."<sup>7</sup> And Lee's initial deployments before Gettysburg were not good for his later needs.

### **The Effect of Lee's Uncertainty**

During the last few hours before fighting erupted, Lee gave no indication that he was expecting to fight a major battle. He did not inform his subordinate commanders that Meade might be nearby or that they might be on the verge of an engagement, and his staff made no plans for such a battle. By this point in all the army's earlier triumphs, Stuart would have supplied him with a detailed picture of the enemy's position and probable intentions. Now such a briefing was sorely lacking. Lee had received from Longstreet's spy, Harrison, the report that Hooker's army was just over the Catoctin Ridge from his own concentration at Chambersburg, but he was still not sure he believed it. Lee had sent out a few scouts of his own to the east of the mountains, but they had not detected the Federal units moving north, failing to support Harrison's account. Without having heard from Stuart, "I do not know what to do," Lee said to other officers.<sup>8</sup>

He told Longstreet he doubted that the Union army was really nearby and spoke of moving over the mountain to Gettysburg the next day to see what General Meade was up to. He jestingly told Hood, "The enemy is a long time finding us; if he does not succeed soon, we must go in search of him."<sup>9</sup> At one moment he seemed to expect the enemy to find him, at another he agreed with Longstreet that it was unlikely the Union forces were anywhere near.<sup>10</sup>

It is not clear what Lee intended to do when he finished consolidating his units, and in all likelihood at that point he did not know himself.

The battle began when Harry Heth marched east to Gettysburg, but this was not in furtherance of any orders from Lee. Heth

marched confidently toward Gettysburg, perhaps in search of the famous shoes, or perhaps just because he was spoiling for a fight. Heth had no cavalry screen in front on his advance, and when his first probe into Gettysburg, under J. J. Pettigrew, ran into opposition, he did not know what he was facing. His corps commander, General Hill, had approved the movement, saying to Heth and to Pettigrew, the commander of the lead brigade, "The only force at Gettysburg is cavalry, probably a detachment of observation. I am just from General Lee, and the information he has from his scouts corroborates that I have received from mine—the enemy are still at Middleburg and have not yet struck their tents."<sup>11</sup> Hill thought he was authorizing a probe or a reconnaissance in force. But such a movement "would have been unthinkable had Jeb Stuart been performing his duties."<sup>12</sup> In other words, such a scouting movement by infantry would have never occurred had the army's usual cavalry screen been in place.

On the Union side of the field, John Buford was screening the van of the Army of the Potomac on its march north. As has been noted, Meade was still thinking defensively. Had Buford not been attacked in Gettysburg, he probably would have scouted toward Chambersburg to confirm the location of the Confederates. Had he run into Confederate cavalry, they would have skirmished and left it at that. Buford most certainly would not have provoked a fight, since he had no such orders. Meade was trailing and watching Lee, but he had no clear plan for an aggressive move against Lee's army when he found it. Buford and Heth had brushed against one another on June 29 at Fairfield, but Heth was on the march northward west of the ridge and Buford was, in effect, tracking Lee's progress while staying east of the ridge. It seems justified to conclude that the absence of a Confederate cavalry screen led to the initial infantry encounter on July 1.

What followed is too well known to require a lengthy retelling here. Buford's cavalry repulsed Heth's initial probe but was forced back when Hill reinforced Heth with Pender and pressed the at-

tack. The Union First Corps arrived in time to prevent Buford's being overrun, and when the Union Eleventh Corps also arrived, the Confederate attack stalled on the ridges west of Gettysburg. The arrival of the first units of Ewell's corps from north of Gettysburg flanked the Union positions in Gettysburg and led to a precipitous retreat through the town onto Cemetery Ridge, east of the town. By the close of the day, the first units of two other Union corps began arriving on the ridge as well.

The first day at Gettysburg, the South's best day, was fought by only four divisions out of nine in the Confederate army, two from Ewell's corps (Early and Rodes) and two from Hill's corps (Heth and Pender). This battle on July 1 was directed by the division commanders and by Ewell.<sup>13</sup>

Ewell consulted with Hill but received no orders from Lee until late in the day on July 1. Lee learned that the battle was under way only when he heard the guns as he rode along the Chambersburg-Gettysburg road.<sup>14</sup>

His uncertainty continued even after the fighting started, for he did not know exactly what Heth's division had run into at Gettysburg. Was it a reinforced cavalry outpost, or was it the van of the main Union army? As the day wore on, it became clear that the army was opposed by elements of two Union army corps, but even then the location of the rest of the Union army remained unclear. Lee's hesitation reflected prudence. He hesitated about committing two-thirds of his army in an all-out attack on the enemy in front of him until he knew something about where the rest of army was. Thus he was ambivalent, cautioning his advance not to get drawn into a full-scale battle until the rest of the army was up, but then displaying no urgency about bringing it up.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, once Heth was heavily engaged, Lee obviously did not feel that he could simply order a withdrawal and go on the defensive.

Johnson's division of Ewell's corps never got into the first day's fight because it had marched south through Carlisle and then east through Chambersburg. Other traffic on the road from Chambers-

burg to Gettysburg had slowed its march, but it did arrive in time to have been used in an attack on the heights late in the day had Lee so ordered.<sup>16</sup>

Gen. R. H. Anderson's division of Hill's corps was also in the jam on the Chambersburg-Gettysburg road and was probably too late arriving to have played a role on the first day even if a renewed attack had been undertaken. It halted on orders from Lee and made camp before it ever reached the battle area.<sup>17</sup>

In short, there is no evidence that Lee tried to hurry these units along, even though he spoke to those already engaged of waiting for reserves. Indeed, at one point, hearing and seeing that Pender was in danger of being pushed back, Heth had to request permission from Lee twice before he was allowed to go to Pender's relief. Lee was still trying to "slow down the tempo" of the fighting.<sup>18</sup>

Even after the battle was inescapably joined, Lee did not know how to direct the attack and made little effort to do so when he arrived at the scene. With the defeated Union forces streaming out of Gettysburg, Lee displayed indecision and hesitancy. Should he push his tired soldiers to take Cemetery Ridge and commit the fresh troops he had available for such an effort? In the end he sent word by a staff officer that Ewell was to take the high ground if possible, while offering no support. Ewell, also hesitant and unsure, judged that it was not possible and did not try.<sup>19</sup>

Early, commanding the leading division, was equally indecisive and waited for specific orders from Ewell, which never came. This collective indecision at this crucial moment may or may not have cost the South the battle, but it surely was due to an agonized ignorance about the tactical situation on the part of the Confederate commanders at all levels, Lee and all his subordinates. A definite decision on the part of any of the key Confederate commanders to move on the heights might have led to a very different outcome. But such a move, in the absence of any intelligence about the strength of the Union position, would have seemed a risky leap in the dark. It could have led to a bloody repulse and turned the apparent victory

of the day into a defeat. Such thoughts must have been in the minds of all the Southern commanders.<sup>20</sup>

Lee's own report on the battle continued to reflect this ambivalence in describing his own actions: "General Ewell therefore was instructed to carry the hill occupied by the enemy if he found it practicable but to avoid a general engagement until the arrival of the other divisions of the army which were ordered to hasten forward . . . In the meantime the enemy occupied the point which General Ewell designed to seize but in what force could not be ascertained owing to the darkness."<sup>21</sup> He could have added, "and owing to the lack of cavalry scouts."

### **The Tactical Intelligence Gap**

The intelligence gap also affected events at the tactical level. Thinking that the enemy troops reported there might well be local militia, Heth marched briskly into Gettysburg. Buford's dismounted cavalry virtually ambushed the advancing Confederates, who continued to press forward, taking needlessly heavy losses, because they expected the enemy to retreat momentarily. Only when Heth's men recognized the black hats of the "iron brigade," which had reinforced Buford, did they know they were fighting their old enemy, the Army of the Potomac.

Meade, by contrast, had excellent intelligence from the network of civilian and military spies under the Bureau of Military Intelligence, as well as from his cavalry screen. He knew exactly what he was up against. On July 1 he wrote to Henry Halleck, "Ewell is massing at Heidlersburg. A. P. Hill is massed behind the mountains at Cashtown. Longstreet is somewhere between Chambersburg and the mountains . . . The enemy is advancing in force on Gettysburg and I expect the battle will begin today."<sup>22</sup> Lee, however, was quoted as saying: "I am in ignorance of what we have in front of us here. It may be the whole Federal army, it may be only a detachment."<sup>23</sup>

The Confederate battlefield intelligence gap continued into the rest of the battle on the first day. A bit later, Early and Pender



FIGURE 16. Col. George H. Sharpe and the Union intelligence network. Sharpe (*on the left*) led the Bureau of Military Intelligence, which accurately tracked Lee's movements in the campaign. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

marched head-on into a hornet's nest because they had no effective cavalry screen and no real information about what was going on in Gettysburg.<sup>24</sup>

Robert Krick's excellent analysis of tactical developments on the first day points out "a series of dark tactical failures in the midst of a Confederate strategic bonanza."<sup>25</sup> In particular, he calls attention to the poor performance of three of the front-line Confederate brigadiers—Joseph Davis in Heth's division and Edward O'Neal and Alfred Iverson in Rodes's division. All three commands suffered near disasters in their initial attacks but survived because of the larger Confederate success. These three brigadiers were particularly inept, but Krick's analysis makes it clear that a large part of the problem was the lack of timely intelligence about their situations. The total absence of any scouting cavalry screen



led them into blunders that their poor leadership then made worse as the battle developed.

Had Stuart's usual Confederate cavalry screen been in place, they would have been briefed on the situation in Gettysburg; as it was, "a few of Jenkins cavalymen untrained in reconnaissance work . . . gave confused reports which did more harm than good."<sup>26</sup> The Union infantry commander had been warned by Buford's cavalry scouts of the approaching Rebel columns and was able to make good defensive preparations.

Late on the first day, a false report of fresh enemy forces approaching along the Hanover road from the northeast tied up two of Early's brigades, and this wild-goose chase contributed strongly to Ewell's decision not to pursue the beaten Union Eleventh Corps onto Cemetery Ridge or to move on Culp's Hill.<sup>27</sup>

So much time was wasted in sending a staff officer to determine that Culp's Hill was not occupied by the Federals that by the time troops were sent to take it was too late. It was a staff officer who scouted the Union positions on Cemetery Ridge and found it was being fortified.<sup>28</sup>

The whole first day, although a successful one for the South, was marked by poor battlefield intelligence, leading to a series of tactical mistakes that left the victors bloodied, disorganized, and in poor condition to exploit their initial success.

The absence of cavalry scouts continued into the second day. When Longstreet was unsure of the best roads to take to position himself for an attack on the Union left, no cavalry screen was available, and a staff officer was sent instead, wasting much valuable time. This contributed to Longstreet's lateness in launching his attack but does not totally explain it. Similarly, the opportunity for the Confederates to occupy both Round Tops unopposed on July 2 was lost because no cavalry scouts were there to report that they were unoccupied.<sup>29</sup> By day three Stuart had returned, but the need for intelligence was less acute, since both armies were effectively dug in and stationary.

### Lee's Generalship at Gettysburg

There seems to be broad agreement that "Gettysburg was the lowest point of Lee's generalship."<sup>30</sup> And this has often been presented as the real puzzle of Gettysburg: why the incomparable Lee fought such a poor battle, thus losing what he himself thought was probably the Confederacy's last chance for a definitive victory. In recent decades some authors have been fascinated with the idea that "Lee was not himself" at Gettysburg and deduced that he must have been ill and preoccupied with that illness. The very successful Civil War novel *The Killer Angels* made much of this theory,<sup>31</sup> and thanks to the movie that followed the novel, it has probably already become a part of popular folklore about the battle. But in fact, supporting evidence is slender.

Chuck Teague recently has examined most meticulously all available evidence on Lee's health and lists an impressive number of ailments and physical problems he suffered from. Apparently Lee's general health was poor even before the Gettysburg campaign started and was deteriorating over time. He would die from these conditions a few years later.<sup>32</sup>

But even with all these ailments, Lee was a notably successful general both before and after Gettysburg. Thus the argument must be that Lee's health was worse at Gettysburg than at any of his other battles and consequently affected his judgment and his leadership there more than elsewhere. Teague believes this is true and advances three sorts of arguments in support of this conclusion. First, there is "circumstantial evidence" that at Gettysburg Lee chose to sleep in a house when he usually (but not always) slept in a tent and that Lee rode at a relatively slow pace even when hurrying along the Chambersburg road toward the sound of the guns. Teague admits these are "slim threads" of evidence.

Second, Teague finds many persons who record that at Gettysburg Lee was not himself: he was "impatient," "agitated," or "depressed" and lacked his usual "equipoise." But none of these reports speaks of any obvious physical symptoms or displays.

Third, there are Lee's own numerous "admissions" of poor health in letters to others, including his famous offer of resignation to Jefferson Davis after Gettysburg. Based on this evidence, Teague concludes that Lee's poor physical state probably affected his judgment and his ability to command. Poor health, Teague argues, affected his intellectual powers and explains Lee's "passivity" and his tentative, indecisive, and uncertain conduct.

A few comments are in order. First, Lee's letters about his health are hardly proof of anything about Gettysburg. He was in poor health, and his letters reflect that he was alternately depressed and encouraged about his ailments, as a long-term patient tends to be.

Second, clear-cut physical evidence that Lee was in worse health than usual is simply not there, the "horse and the house" (as Teague describes them) notwithstanding. Lee was in the saddle daily for a week and showed no ill effects. He seemed physically himself to visitors, and none of his staff officers mention any signs of disability—no frequent naps, no shaky hands, no faltering speech—during this time, nor do any of the other generals of his army who saw him frequently. This absence of evidence must itself be evidence. Surely if Lee's ailments had really been anything close to disabling, others around him would have noticed this and commented on it in their own accounts of the battle. But none did.

Third, it requires no assumption of an impaired physical condition to explain Lee's passive leadership style. He was always a passive leader and hardly ever pushed his subordinates to see that they followed his orders.

Finally, Lee was unsure, uncertain, and indecisive partly during the crucial first two days, but explaining this also requires no assumption of physical impairment.

In fact, the most plausible explanation for Lee's poor conduct of the battle, particularly for his loss of control over events before and during its early stage, was his lack of information about his situation. Lee still did not know whom and what he was up against, and he was not used to dealing with such uncertainty. In all his previous

battles Stuart had been there when he was needed, and Lee could quickly decide the correct course of action. The result was that Lee was agitated and indecisive throughout the first day, and there is considerable firsthand evidence of this. Capt. Justus Scheibert of the Prussian Royal Engineers—who was on Seminary Ridge as an observer, as he had been at Chancellorsville—made a revealing comparison of the commanding general's attitude in the two battles. At Chancellorsville, Lee was "full of calm, quiet, self-possession." The calmness was wanting at Gettysburg: "Lee was not at his ease, but was riding to and fro, frequently changing his position, making anxious inquiries here and there, and looking care-worn . . . This uneasiness was contagious to the army."<sup>33</sup> Douglas Southall Freeman and other writers agree with this conclusion. Russell Weigley, for example, observes that "Stuart's absence adversely affected Lee's confidence and his judgment."<sup>34</sup>

Lee understood the nature of his problem at Gettysburg and summed it up after the war. Gettysburg "was commenced in the absence of correct intelligence. It was continued in the effort to overcome the difficulties by which we were surrounded."<sup>35</sup>

Adding to Lee's problems must have been a growing anxiety over the safety of Stuart and the cream of his cavalry division. The prolonged silence could well mean that Stuart's luck had finally run out and that the army would have to do without the elite of its cavalry and their leader. Casual visitors to his headquarters were asked if they had seen anything of Stuart. Many later accounts agree that Lee expressed great concern over Stuart's safety.<sup>36</sup>

Lee's highly unusual outburst when Stuart did arrive confirms the depths of his anxiety, as does his indirect reproof of Stuart in his official report on the campaign. Lee missed the vital intelligence it was Stuart's job to give him, but he also feared for the man and his command.

In sum, the battle started well for the Confederacy. Lee had a three-day head start on Meade on the march into Pennsylvania, but he wasted two days waiting to hear from Stuart. Even so, Lee's army

was one day closer to being concentrated in the right place than was Meade's. But Lee was unaware of this and failed to take advantage of his favorable position. The battle was forced on Lee, and he seemed to have no plan of how to fight it until the picture became clear on the second day, by which time events had forced his hand. By the time he knew he was confronting the main Union force, his opportunity for a battle of maneuver was gone. The thread that runs through all his actions in this opening phase is hesitancy and uncertainty, traits distinctly unlike Lee in all his earlier battles. Accepting that Lee was in poor health changes nothing. This same uncertainty because of his intelligence gap would have been present and the consequences the same even had Lee been in robust health.

### **The Cavalry Fight on July 3**

The most authoritative account of their meeting in Gettysburg on July 2 has Lee telling Stuart that he needed his help to beat "these people": the Union army. And in a matter of a few hours he had indeed given Stuart and his men a new and potentially important assignment: they were to move so as to threaten the right rear of the Union line as the Confederate army assaulted it from the front.

Stuart had arrived in midafternoon, ahead of his men. By the night of July 2 Stuart's entire raiding party (three brigades) was in camp near Gettysburg. Gen. Albert Jenkins's brigade had also joined Stuart in Gettysburg by the night of July 2, but Beverly Robertson, "Grumble" Jones, and John Imboden still had not been heard from. The rearmost of his brigades, that of Wade Hampton, had gotten drawn into a sharp fight at Hunterstown on the way into Gettysburg and did not make camp near Gettysburg until late that night.

This Hunterstown battle was another brief, fierce, and completely accidental cavalry skirmish. On July 2 Gen. George Custer's brigade had been protecting the extreme right of the Union line supporting the Union corps defending Culp's Hill and the "fishhook." Custer had not been engaged by the enemy, and on orders from Gen. Judson Kilpatrick, he moved on the Confederate flank toward Hunter-

stown, hoping to create a diversion and relieve Confederate pressure on Culp's Hill. When Custer encountered the rear elements of Hampton's brigade moving toward Gettysburg, he assumed they were only scouts on the Union flank, so he attacked vigorously. Stung by this sudden threat, Hampton halted, faced about, and countercharged, driving Custer back. Though neither side pursued the fight, Custer was rebuffed, so he rode back and took position in support of the Union right flank and rear as before.

The Confederate cavalymen had little time to rest and were up early the next day to prepare for the new assignment. At midday on July 3 Stuart led his four brigades, with Jenkins's men (now commanded by Col. Milton Ferguson) in the lead, down the York Road toward the Union right flank.

It is not entirely clear what Lee had in mind with this movement by Stuart; his orders were not in writing, and none of the later accounts by his staff officers discuss this issue. Stuart's account written after the battle is unhelpful, saying that he was merely protecting the left flank of the Confederate army and that he never intended an offensive move. This makes little sense, since the subsequent action took place several miles from the end of the Confederate line and actually in the rear of part of the Union line (remembering the "fishhook" shape of the battle line around Culp's Hill). As Stephen Starr says flatly, "This is not worth a moment's credence."<sup>37</sup>

Actually, Stuart's report tries to have it both ways, since he also says, "Had the enemy's main body been dislodged . . . I was in precisely the right position to discover and improve the opportunity. I watched keenly and anxiously the indications in his rear for that purpose, while in the attack which I intended . . . his cavalry would have separated from the main body and gave promise of solid results and advantages."<sup>38</sup> This suggests a considerably larger objective than merely protecting the flank.

We can only guess at what Lee had in mind. Perhaps he hoped to distract Meade with Stuart and draw the Union reserves to this subsidiary fight, thus increasing George Pickett's chances of taking

Cemetery Ridge. A second possibility is that Lee really expected Pickett to effect a breach and drive the Union line back in disorder. If this occurred, Stuart and the cavalry would then be positioned to launch a classic cavalry follow-up that would turn the retreat into a rout. Such an effort to use his cavalry in this fashion would be consistent with Lee's planning to fight, for the first time, a battle of annihilation.

The two scenarios are variants of the same theme. Stuart is to distract Meade by threatening his flank while Pickett assaults his front. Stuart is then to exploit the Confederate breakthrough and pursue the retreating Union forces. It does appear that Lee planned for the cavalry to be an important part of the final big push on the third day of the battle. Stuart's report seems to hint at this.

Gettysburg would have been the first such use by Lee of his cavalry, but if one examines the tactical situation at his earlier great victories, such as Second Manassas, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville, there simply was no opportunity there for such a use of his cavalry. In all these earlier cases, the enemy was either entrenched or shielded by natural obstacles such as a river. Lee was aware that in several previous episodes in which cavalry had charged infantry that was not already disorganized and dispersed, the results were disastrous for the cavalry. One of the most senior Union cavalrymen, Gen. Phillip St. George Cooke (Jeb Stuart's father-in-law) made this mistake at Gaines Mill in the Peninsula and lost half a regiment.<sup>39</sup> Lee could not know it, but a bit later on in the battle Kilpatrick was to launch one of his brigades (Elon Farnsworth's) on a similar costly and pointless cavalry attack on an infantry position on the other flank of the battle line.

Unfortunately for Lee's plan, and for reasons not clear, David Gregg, commander of the Union Second Cavalry Division, had for two days anticipated such a move by the Confederates. By July 2, both Kilpatrick's and Gregg's divisions were in the area of the battle but were not engaged. They were, in effect, the rear and right flank guard of the army, Buford's division being on the left flank.

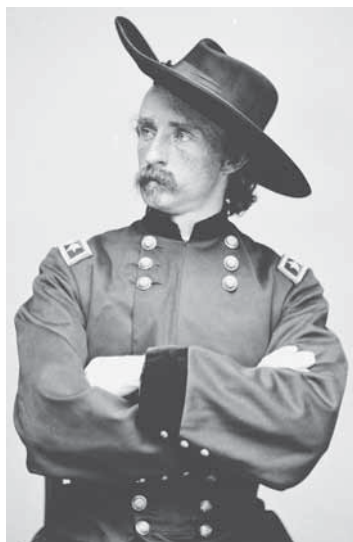


FIGURE 17. (*Top left*) Gen. David M. Gregg. Gregg's Union cavalry division pursued Stuart on his ride north, finally encountering him on July 3 at the Rummel farm east of Gettysburg. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



FIGURE 18. (*Above*) Gen. George A. Custer. Custer led furious attacks on Stuart with support from Gen. Judson Kilpatrick. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

FIGURE 19. (*Left*) Gen. Judson H. Kilpatrick. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



As noted earlier, Custer had been positioned on the right rear on July 2 but, when no Confederate attack materialized on his front, had made his abortive move on the Confederate flank, resulting in the skirmish with Hampton in Hunterstown. Gregg's troopers also took a station on the right of the Union position on Culp's Hill but were closer to the infantry and amounted to an extension of the Union line. In this position, along Brinkerhoff's Ridge late on July 2 they intercepted and repelled an attack by a brigade of Confederate infantry (the "Stonewall Brigade," in fact) that had aimed at getting around the end of the Union position on the "fishhook." The presence of Gregg's cavalry in that spot undoubtedly materially assisted in the defense of Culp's Hill.

### **The Cavalry Action on July 3**

This action by the Confederate infantry on July 2 was not the wide turning movement Gregg anticipated, however, and he remained concerned about this possibility. Late on July 2 Custer and Farnsworth, heading the two brigades of Kilpatrick's division available at that point, were ordered to shift to the left flank of the army, replacing Buford, and Gregg was ordered to continue his close support of the Union line on Culp's Hill. Gregg argued that they needed a blocking force of cavalry strategically located at the rear of the right flank. The corps commander, Gen. Alfred Pleasonton, agreed and ordered Custer to remain on the right flank rear of the army. Gregg, however, was ordered to continue his direct support of the right flank of the Union line on Culp's Hill.

At about noon on July 3 word reached Gregg from the Eleventh Corps lookouts on Culp's Hill of Stuart's movement along the York road. Gregg immediately moved his own two brigades in support of Custer, going against his explicit orders. Thus it was that on the afternoon of the third, three brigades of Union cavalry were positioned in just the right place to intercept Stuart. This seems to have resulted from the good judgment of one man, with more than bit of luck thrown in.

It was early afternoon on July 3 when the Confederate cavalry left camp and began moving down the York road. It had had to replenish its ammunition stocks and no doubt perform other routine maintenance on equipment and animals. Stuart finally moved in broad daylight and in full view of the Union observation posts on Cemetery Ridge and Culp's Hill, with no effort at deception. This was in sharp contrast to his departure at night from Salem on June 25, precisely to shield the movement from any Union lookouts on Bull Run Ridge. But in fairness to Stuart, this time he had no time to spare for deception. His command had arrived only the night before, and he had to be in position to attack the next afternoon. Getting his animals and men back on the road only a few hours after they had arrived in Gettysburg must have been challenging.

Stuart rode some two and a half miles down the York road from Gettysburg,<sup>40</sup> which angled to the northeast from the battlefield, then turned right on a small road leading toward several farms. About one mile down this road, he reached the Rummel farm, which lay at the foot of some high ground called Cress Ridge. The ridge gave a good view to the south of the Hanover road and the rear of the Union lines, and this vantage point had probably been Stuart's objective when he left the York road. He announced his arrival with some pointless (and targetless) cannon fire, single shots fired in several directions. Henry B. McClellan later wrote that it was assumed this was a prearranged signal to Lee that Stuart was in position, but neither Stuart nor Lee mentions any such arrangement, which would have been unique in the army's experience and practice. Whatever else it was intended to do, the cannon fire certainly pinpointed Stuart's location for the Union cavalry. Both Custer and Gregg heard these cannon shots and judged that they implied some significant action by the Confederate cavalry.

The short engagement that followed in the fields of the Rummel farm was, from the Confederate standpoint, an ineptly managed affair. The scene was totally tranquil when Stuart arrived on Cress Ridge, but he could see Union pickets along the Hanover road and

seems to have sensed that he was nearing the Union line. Stuart dismounted his lead brigade (Jenkins's brigade) and moved it forward on foot as a skirmish line, a highly unusual tactic for Stuart, who rarely fought dismounted. John Chambliss's brigade supported this probing move, but Hampton and Fitzhugh Lee had not yet arrived.

Eric Wittenberg's excellent account of the battle says that Stuart had planned to engage the Union cavalry with Jenkins's dismounted advance below the ridge and then hit its right flank with all three of his remaining brigades. But Fitzhugh Lee and Hampton were slow in arriving; Stuart had trouble reaching them and does not appear to have given them clear orders at the outset about what he was trying to accomplish. Hampton and the other Confederate leaders mostly reacted to Union movements in an uncoordinated fashion.<sup>41</sup>

Gregg had been warned of this movement of the Southern cavalry and, moreover, had been expecting it. Thanks to him, the Union command had a strong cavalry force on that flank (to repeat, two brigades of Gregg's division reinforced by Custer's brigade of Kilpatrick's division), and the Confederate movement ran directly into them.

Gregg had deployed his brigades on a line from the Hanover road north along the Salem Church road directly in Stuart's path. Custer's brigade was in the most advanced position, and when he observed Stuart's forward movement he dismounted some of his regiments to meet the Confederate advance. The two skirmish lines contended in the fields south of Cress Ridge and north of the Hanover road. Stuart's artillery, on Cress Ridge, fired in support of the advance, and Union batteries along Salem Church road replied in kind. Col. M. J. Ferguson's (acting in command of Jenkins's brigade) situation soon threatened to become desperate, since for some unknown reason his men had drawn only ten rounds of ammunition each and quickly began to run out. Stuart supported Ferguson with Chambliss's and Hampton's brigades, the next of his units to arrive on the scene. Gregg reinforced Custer with John McIntosh's

brigade, and the fight continued as essentially an infantry and artillery exchange. Fitzhugh Lee's brigade arrived last and, seeing that Ferguson appeared to be hard-pressed, launched a mounted attack from Cress Ridge toward the Hanover road. This appears to have been without Stuart's orders, but Stuart then ordered Hampton and Chambliss to join the attack. Stuart appears to have lost control of the fight at this point. He gave no order for a general advance, and the result was a series of uncoordinated attacks that initially drove McIntosh and Custer back.

Gregg was very much on top of the situation, however, and the Union cavalry responded vigorously with a series of countercharges led by Custer. The battle evolved into a confused series of piecemeal actions directed largely by the brigade commanders and was one of the rare cavalry versus cavalry fights in the whole war. (Hampton was badly wounded in the action.) Neither side gained a clear advantage, but Stuart ended up about where he had started on Cress Ridge. The engagement was relatively brief, and Stuart was content to withdraw from the field and settle for a drawn fight. The Federal cavalry did not pursue.

Several points can be made on Stuart's conduct of this action. First, Stuart was general enough to know that moving in broad daylight in full view of the Union observation posts on the heights would make it difficult to achieve surprise. Perhaps had he gone a good ten or fifteen miles down the York road, out of sight of the Union observers, and then made his move toward the Union rear, he could have accomplished some surprise. But the timing was too tight to offer him that option. His command had arrived the previous night, and a few hours later he had to move it so as to be in position on the enemy's flank by midafternoon. He had no time to spare, since he had to coordinate his attack with the frontal attack on Cemetery Ridge already scheduled. No doubt Stuart rode down the York road as far as he thought he could and still be in position to coordinate his attack with Pickett's. But Stuart must have known he was not going to achieve surprise.

Second, knowing that he was moving against a prepared enemy would explain Stuart's cautious, dismounted skirmish-line approach to making contact with the enemy. Wittenberg suggests that Stuart hoped to lure the Union cavalry into attacking his dismounted line, affording him the opportunity for a vigorous mounted counter-stroke that would have given him the tactic initiative and a chance to break the enemy line.

Stuart's plan seemed to fail partly because of the tardy arrival of some of his brigades and poor coordination of their attacks. In fairness to Stuart, he had only a few hours to prepare his tired and battered command for a new major offensive. He seems to have become half-hearted and unsure once it was clear that he had been intercepted by Gregg.

Finally, the Confederate cavalry attacks were not up to their usual standard. Most accounts note that Stuart's men seemed to lack their usual *élan* and suggest that the poor performance of Stuart's command in this action was attributable to residual fatigue from the eight days of hard riding. Weigley, for example, says, "Stuart's badly fatigued command [was] unable to contribute all that it might have to the battle on July 3."<sup>42</sup> Almost certainly the subpar performance by Stuart and his command can be at least partly explained by their having spent the previous week constantly in the saddle.

This cavalry action has never loomed large in accounts of the battle at Gettysburg, probably because it was in fact not as important to the outcome as the major infantry actions on all three days.

But several recent authors have argued that it might have been very important indeed and proposed a tantalizing "what if" about this cavalry action.<sup>43</sup> Suppose Stuart had driven the Union cavalry back and appeared to pose a threat to the rear of the Union infantry on Cemetery Ridge. Could Pickett then have ruptured the Union line and achieved the elusive victory? Stuart never penetrated the Union cavalry line, but if he had, would this have led to an unraveling from the right flank of the Union line such as occurred at Second Bull Run or Chancellorsville? If the Union line had collapsed,

Stuart would have been in a position to stage a vigorous pursuit and turn retreat into rout. Perhaps this was Lee's "real plan" the whole time.

This "alternative history" scenario concludes that Stuart's failure on July 3 was crucial to the outcome of the entire battle. If one accepts this logic, it could be carried a step further. It was Stuart's great raid on Washington that was responsible for the decline in Confederate fortunes at Gettysburg. Stuart arrived too late to be able to position himself properly for the vital attack on the Union flank, and his troops were so worn out that they could not execute their part of Lee's aggressive plan for the battle. The price of Stuart's raid was failure at the Rummel farm on July 3 and thus for the entire campaign.

This scenario is all very speculative indeed and, as actual events unfolded, not very likely. Pickett's charge never came close to succeeding. Even if Stuart had broken through the energetic Union cavalry on July 3, he would not have routed it, and Meade would have had plenty of time to shift infantry reserves to support Gregg and Custer. Stuart would have been charging not disorganized, retreating infantry but a compact line of battle composed of veteran soldiers. He might have met a fate similar to the one his father-in-law suffered at Gaines Mill.

The key is that Stuart did not achieve surprise and that a strong Union cavalry force was waiting for him. These things being true, his best efforts were not going to affect the outcome of the battle. On the other hand, had Stuart achieved surprise and had he not been intercepted by Gregg, the alternative scenario with a different outcome becomes at least a possibility.

Would the presence of enemy cavalry in the right rear of the Union positions along Cemetery Ridge have materially affected resistance to Pickett's charge on their front? Even assuming he had achieved surprise and gained this position to threaten the Union rear, Stuart would have been heavily engaged by Union cavalry and infantry and greatly outnumbered. Could this have caused the

Union line to crumble or fall back? This tantalizing question can now be added to all the other “what ifs” about Gettysburg.

As actual events unfolded, the outcome of the battle was being decided elsewhere on the field. Stuart could perhaps have added the finishing touches to a Confederate breakthrough, but he could not have caused it. Since Pickett’s charge failed, the outcome of the cavalry fight was not going to change anything even if Stuart had made a better job of it. The recent rediscovery of this fight and its possible significance as a clue to Lee’s intentions has led, perhaps, to an overemphasis on its importance. Only if Stuart had achieved surprise and gained the Union rear “unhindered” can one imagine his movement’s having an impact on the outcome on Cemetery Ridge.

There is another puzzle of sorts, too. Gregg seemed to know exactly where Stuart would strike. Stuart might well have ridden another five miles down the York road before turning off toward the Union rear, making a wider sweep around the flank. Or he could have made a shorter hook around the end of the Union line on Culp’s Hill. Gregg’s report on the battle suggests that he expected the enemy to move along the Hanover road and that he was covering the secondary roads leading from this road into the rear of Cemetery Ridge. Stuart actually moved north of the Hanover road but encountered Gregg in any case. This was shrewd military intuition by Gregg.<sup>44</sup> This tactic deserves more attention than it has received in the literature.

## 9. The Consequences of Stuart's Raid

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Considered strictly as a raid, Stuart's ride had been a modest success. He had disrupted enemy communications and supply lines, albeit only very temporarily; struck panic into many Unionists in Washington, Baltimore, and elsewhere; inflicted many more casualties on the enemy than he had suffered himself; and collected a substantial amount of booty, most notably the famous 125 wagons. But he did no significant or lasting damage, nor did he distract the Union command from the business at hand, the major engagement looming in Pennsylvania. An astute British observer of these events put it very well: "That the cavalry did do a certain amount of damage in this raid is true; but it may be doubted that they delayed the northward march of the Union army for a single hour."<sup>1</sup>

Stuart's own report claims that he drew a Union cavalry division after him. This is correct, but that division reached Gettysburg before he did, and its absence to that point did no harm to the Union position. Stuart further suggested that the Union Sixth Corps arrived late at Gettysburg because it was delayed to protect Union lines of communication, which is simply not true. Stuart's first modern biographer, John Thomason, goes further still in adding spurious "accomplishments":

He drew after him two cavalry divisions and caused Meade to retain a corps of infantry on the line of communications. He took



an army supply train of 125 wagons and brought it off safely. He captured nearly 1,000 prisoners. He rode two hundred and fifty miles, lived off the country, whipped Kilpatrick, burnt Carlisle and immobilized 15,000 men in that region who were under orders that would have brought them on Ewell's flank and rear, and he rejoined his main army.<sup>2</sup>

Thomason's claim that Stuart's attack at Carlisle prevented Union Gen. W. F. Smith (and his Pennsylvania militia) from hitting Lee from behind cannot be taken seriously. Similarly, Stuart's brief battle with Kilpatrick at Hanover was no victory for Stuart. This was an accidental encounter, since it was Gregg, not Kilpatrick, who had been sent in pursuit of Stuart. Kilpatrick, who knew—as Stuart did not—that a major clash of the armies was in the offing, chose not to continue the fight after the encounter, which was fortunate for Stuart.

The truth is that, while aware of Stuart's activities, the Union command sent Gregg with most of one cavalry division (two brigades) to chase him but otherwise ignored him. They had had enough experience of his raids to know that they were pretty harmless in the larger picture. Meade commented in a message to Halleck on June 29, "The cavalry force between me and Washington, as soon as I can learn sufficiently of their movement to pursue and fight without wasting the necessary force by useless movement, will be engaged by my cavalry . . . My main point being to find and fight the enemy, I shall have to submit to the cavalry raid around me, in some measure."<sup>3</sup>

### **The Narrow Escape in Hanover**

Thomason notes that Stuart did rejoin the main army, and this was perhaps his greatest accomplishment—that he did survive, that he did eventually bring the core of Lee's cavalry back to the army, exhausted and battered but intact. His entire march had been a series of running fights. This was Stuart's first experience with a prolonged

sortie inside Union lines, and he was surprised by the opposition he met from rear-echelon units and local militia. But he had no choice except to plow ahead.

The Union forces had reacted more swiftly and with greater determination than ever before. Neither Stuart nor Lee expected Hooker to be able to move his entire army across the Potomac in two days, and this created the logistical problem for Stuart. Burdened as he was with the wagons, he was not able to move much faster than the Union infantry, which was traveling on a parallel course. The enemy was always there blocking his way west, so he had to continue going north so long as he clung to the wagons.

Stuart had a very close call in Hanover on June 29. Stuart's lead brigade, Hampton's, ran into Kilpatrick's rear guard. Far from pursuing Stuart, Kilpatrick was at that moment shielding the right of Meade's army and had no idea where Stuart was or what he was up to. Kilpatrick managed the brief, hard-fought fight at Hanover reasonably well, but he had no orders to pursue Stuart and consequently was content with a drawn battle. Had Kilpatrick been given orders to bring Stuart to bay at Hanover, he might very well have done so.<sup>4</sup>

Stuart was encumbered by his booty, and his command was stretched out over many miles of road, so he had trouble concentrating his brigades to fight effectively. This, as he explained later, was one reason he was also content to settle for a drawn fight at the close of the day. Moreover, horses and men were already tired from a week's hard riding, and having been in a series of fights all along the way, he was already low on ammunition.

Unknown to Stuart (and to Kilpatrick!), Gregg's division was only one day behind him. On the night of June 29, "Stuart found himself no more than seven miles from Kilpatrick's cavalry division encamped at Littlestown and an equally short seven miles from Gregg's division at New Windsor."<sup>5</sup>

There appears to have been no communication between Kilpatrick and Gregg, but had there been, Gregg could have easily joined

the fight in Hanover. Stuart might very well have found himself trapped in Hanover, guarding his wagons deep in enemy country, caught between the two Federal cavalry divisions. Moreover, we cannot truly say it was Stuart's tactical skill that brought off this narrow escape. He fought at Hanover with his usual personal bravery and dash, but it was mostly luck that got him through—luck that Kilpatrick chose not to renew the fight the next day and keep Stuart pinned until Gregg's fresh division caught up to him. In sum, Stuart was lucky that Meade was so little concerned about his raid that he chose to largely ignore it. Had he made a concerted effort to find and trap Stuart, he almost certainly would have done so. Stuart had taken an incredible risk and pulled it off.

### **Stuart's Failure to Screen the Army**

When Lee was on the march, Stuart's role was to screen the army's movements and thus deprive the enemy of information about its location and intentions. As has been noted, Stuart's troopers were superb in this role. The space between the armies "belonged" to Stuart, and much of the legendary elusiveness of Lee's army was due to Stuart's skill at providing it with an impenetrable screen of cavalry scouts. No doubt some of this Confederate superiority was attributable to deficiencies in the training, organization, and leadership of the Union cavalry in the first half of the war. There was also the presence of Mosby and other irregular scouting units operating freely among the ardently pro-South population of Virginia to gain intelligence and give warning of enemy movements. Mosby was a "partisan ranger," which in practice meant spy as much as it did cavalry scout.

This advantage was exactly reversed in the Gettysburg campaign. Recognizing the army's deficiencies in scouting and intelligence, some months earlier Hooker had set about reorganizing and revitalizing his cavalry, collecting the previously scattered units into a single corps reporting directly to him. He made an effort to revitalize the leadership as well, leading to the promotion of the three

famous "boy brigadiers," George Custer, Wesley Merritt, and Elon Farnsworth. It was this new corps that surprised Stuart at Brandy Station and pressed him so hard in the Loudon Valley for two weeks in June.

The newly created Bureau of Military Intelligence, under Col. George H. Sharpe, had organized a network of civilian agents and observers charged with promptly reporting enemy movements to the army headquarters. This spy network functioned superbly in the Gettysburg campaign. Edwin Fishel reports that "one hundred and more reports, revealing the invaders' positions, the direction of their advance, and often their identity, came out of the country [the Confederates] traveled the last eight days of June."<sup>6</sup>

The Union cavalry had moved swiftly north from its previous positions in Virginia and rejoined the Army of the Potomac to scout west of it. Julius Stahel's cavalry division was already positioned at Crampton's Gap in South Mountain by June 27. With all this information Meade and the army, as well as Halleck and Union headquarters, had a very accurate picture of Confederate strength, location, and direction of march. As was noted, on July 1, just as the battle was about to begin, Meade informed Halleck that "Ewell is massing at Heidlersburg. A. P. Hill is massed behind the mountains at Cashtown. Longstreet somewhere between Chambersburg and the mountains . . . the enemy is advancing in force on Gettysburg and I expect the battle will begin today."<sup>7</sup>

As Fishel goes on to point out, "What the absence of the cavalry meant to Lee's security against Union spies and scouts [was that] . . . had Jeb Stuart been in his proper place alongside the Southern infantry, the men who obtained and forwarded information would have had incomparably greater difficulty in getting through the Confederate lines . . . [they] would have been seriously slowed down, if not blocked altogether, as they attempted to make their way to telegraph offices and Federal positions." In earlier battles, Stuart "had done an excellent job of keeping prying eyes and questioning tongues away from the Southern infantry. Stuart, however,

was no longer marching with Lee.”<sup>8</sup> To cap off this Union informational advantage, when the battle began on July 1, Buford from his vantage point atop the Gettysburg Seminary tower could clearly see Pender’s and Early’s divisions making their way to Gettysburg from the north.

### **Gettysburg as an Accidental Battle**

One of the many frequently repeated shibboleths about Gettysburg is that the battle was an accident: neither army knew the whereabouts of the other, and they simply collided in Gettysburg because that was where all the roads converged. For example: “If . . . the absence of the cavalry permitted Lee to be surprised . . . Meade was just as surprised and the initial advantage lay with Lee.”<sup>9</sup> And more recently David Eicher writes, “The battle of Gettysburg, the largest and costliest act of warfare played out in the Western Hemisphere, began primarily as an accident in the sense that neither Union nor Confederate forces planned for a battle.”<sup>10</sup> Another recent author says, “The Union army was just as ignorant of the Confederate army’s position as Lee was of the Federals . . . Now the armies would run into each other.”<sup>11</sup>

The foregoing discussion of intelligence should make it clear that this interpretation is insupportable. Meade knew exactly where Lee was and was moving to intercept him. When Buford sent word of Heth’s advance in force eastward toward Gettysburg, Meade assumed this was the offensive move by Lee that he had been expecting. But until June 28 Lee did not know even the general location of his enemy. Hearing the cannons as he rode toward Gettysburg on July 1, he still did not believe a major battle was in the offing. The battle of Gettysburg was an accident only from the Confederate viewpoint. Martin observes:

It has often been discussed how differently the battle would have gone on July 1 if Stuart had crossed the Potomac with the army’s infantry and headed north with Ewell’s corps rather than conduct-

ing his ride around the Union army in order to meet Ewell's advance somewhere in central Pennsylvania. Had Stuart been with Ewell all the while, his patrols would probably have controlled all the roadways between Cashtown and York, perhaps as far south as Hanover and Gettysburg. This would have made Meade much more concerned about Lee's advance wing (Ewell) and would not have enabled Meade to receive such concise information about the location of Ewell's divisions on June 28–30. As a result, Meade (given his concern for covering Philadelphia and Baltimore) would probably have shifted his advance to the east, and the decisive battle of the campaign would have occurred on the line of Hanover-York rather than at Gettysburg . . . Thus, it is likely that there would have been no meeting engagement had Stuart been with Ewell's advance since the primary attention of both commanders would have been focused more to the east.<sup>12</sup>

The British military observer G. F. R. Henderson noted, "The important circumstance to notice is, that from the time the Confederate infantry crossed the Potomac until the battle of Gettysburg had been fought and lost, Lee had not a single cavalry soldier between himself and the enemy . . . In nearly every book on tactics, we have instances of the great use of cavalry in screening and . . . reconnoitering. At Gettysburg we have an instance of this screen being altogether absent."<sup>13</sup> And he continued, "Had the advance of the Confederate brigade (Pettigrew) been covered by cavalry, in all probability the strength and composition of the enemy's force, and also whether it was supported, would have been ascertained."<sup>14</sup>

### **The Other Cavalry Available to Lee**

Stuart's partisans argue that Lee had other cavalry he could have used in place of Stuart. This amounts to saying that had Lee known Stuart would be out of touch for a full week and would not be available to perform his regular duties, there were other mounted units Lee might have tried to employ for scouting and screening his right

flank. But Lee had no reason to assume this. In all the previous campaigns, even the two rides around the enemy army, Stuart has been back in touch within three days. Right up through June 30 Lee expected Stuart imminently, and the only other cavalry units Lee had to hand were Jenkins's brigade and smaller independent cavalry units that were scouting for Ewell in the van. They could be spread only so thin.

Moreover, the various cavalry brigades in Lee's army were not interchangeable parts. Jenkins and his units were all newly joined to Lee's army, having previously been on outpost duty in southern and western Virginia. They had proved very useful at foraging but less than totally reliable at scouting, and Lee did not completely trust their reports.<sup>15</sup> Recall that in his earlier orders to Ewell Lee cautioned him to send a staff officer with Jenkins to supervise his activities.

The poor quality of one of these units, White's Thirty-fifth Virginia Battalion (the Commanches), is well described by Martin: "The Commanches were known to be a somewhat disorderly lot . . . [they] made quite an impression on the citizens of the town . . . the wildness was exacerbated by the fact that a fair number obtained liquor from some of the citizens . . . General Early arrived at about 1700 and must have been both disgusted and amused at the inebriated confusion of the Commanches."<sup>16</sup> Imboden's brigade was cut from the same cloth, and Lee considered it "unsteady" and "inefficient."<sup>17</sup> Would Lee have trusted such a unit to provide good scouting and screening?

Imboden's brigade was scouting and screening to the west of the army, and this was a necessary precaution against surprise from that direction. In any case, Imboden was also slow rejoining the army, and Lee did not know exactly where this unit was. There were also the two brigades under Beverly Robertson left guarding the army's rear in the passes along the Blue Ridge. Lee had ordered Stuart to instruct these units to rejoin the main army as soon as their front was clear of enemy. Before he left, Stuart had indeed given Robert-

son orders that if the Union forces appeared to withdraw from the eastern approaches to the valley, he was to take his entire command and move up the valley to rejoin the main army. "After the enemy has moved beyond your reach, leave sufficient pickets in the mountains, withdraw to the west side of the Shenandoah, place a strong and reliable picket to watch the enemy at Harpers Ferry, cross the Potomac and follow the army, keeping on its right and rear."<sup>18</sup>

But Stuart left in command of this detachment Robertson, an officer of dubious reliability, rather than his nominal second-in-command, Hampton. Longstreet had suggested Hampton, and Stuart's later explanation that Robertson was experienced in "outpost" work makes little sense, since he was not being assigned to outpost duty. Moreover, a rereading of these orders from Stuart to Robertson shows that while they do in fact give him the instructions Lee had suggested, they convey no real sense of urgency. Robertson is to "rejoin" the army, but not "swiftly" or "with all haste." Hampton or Fitzhugh Lee would not have needed such an obvious amplification, but Robertson did, and he could legitimately say he had followed his orders as he thought best.

In the event, Robertson stayed in place a full four days after contact with the Union scouts had ceased, leaving only on June 29. Lee expected him to turn up, because this is what Stuart was supposed to have arranged. But he did not know exactly what Stuart had ordered Robertson to do. Finally he sent a courier to find Robertson and recall him to the main army, but even then Robertson showed no great haste and came by a very indirect route, crossing the Potomac well west at Martinsburg, leading Mosby to observe that "Stuart had ridden around General Hooker while Robertson was riding around General Lee."<sup>19</sup>

Robertson's two brigades arrived in Gettysburg at about the same time as Stuart and as Imboden, who had rested his command for two days at Hancock and arrived a day later.<sup>20</sup>

The real point is that Lee did not want just any cavalryman; he wanted his chief cavalryman and scout, Jeb Stuart. He assumed



that Stuart would turn up at any moment and consequently did not realize he needed other cavalry. Moreover, Stuart bears some responsibility for Robertson's poor performance, because he was his commander too. Lee's orders to Stuart made it clear that he was in charge of all the cavalry, and Stuart ignored this duty. Stuart knew when he left on June 24 that he was planning a raid toward Washington and that he would be out of touch with the army for a relatively long time—until they were both into Pennsylvania, according to Stuart's own admission. Stuart knew he would not be on the army's right flank as Lee wanted, but Stuart could have ordered Robertson to perform this duty in his place. Stuart's orders to Robertson should have made clear the urgency of these two brigades' rejoining the army as soon as possible and taking their places as a scouting force on the right flank of the main body of the army, not the "rear," as Stuart in fact suggested. Stuart's orders conveyed no such specifics and also no urgency about their move north.

In sum, Stuart's raid achieved little and did nothing to hinder the Union army from moving swiftly and effectively to Gettysburg. Stuart's absence and his failure to perform his role as cavalry commander deprived Lee of the scouting reports and battlefield intelligence crucial to his plan for the campaign. This absence also made it easier for the Union spies and scouts to accurately track the movements of Lee's army. When Stuart did arrive at Gettysburg it was too late, and his command was too worn out to play a useful role in the battle. The course of the battle followed from these inescapable realities.

## 10. Stuart and the Defeat at Gettysburg

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Several firm conclusions about the role of Gen. Jeb Stuart in the Gettysburg campaign seem warranted based on the new review undertaken above. Too many of the earlier debates over these issues have become matters of personality and personal preference. Who was the more blatant apologist (and hence fabricator), Henry B. McClellan or Charles Marshall? Was Lee or Stuart the more admirable (and hence believable and error-free) historical figure? These are the wrong questions. Conclusions should flow from a careful reading of the relevant evidence from earlier campaigns and what this tells us of the way Lee and Stuart interacted and fought battles; from the preponderance of firsthand accounts of the events of Gettysburg; and from the internal logic dictated by the time line and the geography of the campaign. This approach does yield some new conclusions.

### Some Conclusions

First, the voluminous literature on the orders that passed between Lee and Stuart is almost all beside the point. It was not the wording of the orders that created the problem; it was Stuart's determination to "strike a blow" on his own. Lee gave Stuart the same sort of general instructions for the Gettysburg campaign that he had always given him. As usual, they gave Stuart considerable discretion about timing and route of travel. Stuart was a general in command

of the army's cavalry and did not need to be told precisely how to do his job. No hairsplitting over words in Lee's orders to Stuart can obscure the underlying assumption in all of Lee's communications that Stuart would be with the army as it moved north. Stuart surely knew that Lee expected him to rejoin the army in Maryland as soon as possible.

Lee anticipated that Stuart would cross the Potomac just east of the Blue Ridge, at the head of the Loudon Valley (or at worst just east of the Bull Run mountain range near Leesburg), after passing around whatever Federal units were still deployed there. Wherever Stuart crossed, Lee believed it was clear that he was to make contact with the army in a few days and screen and scout for it as soon as he was north of the river. Stuart must have known it was important for the success of the campaign that he rejoin the army in Maryland as soon as he could. Letting Lee set off on a risky campaign in enemy country with no cavalry screen should have been unthinkable to Stuart the skilled cavalryman, but to Stuart the raider it was not.

Stuart apparently decided sometime before leaving on June 24 to pursue his own agenda and undertake a far-reaching raid on the Union rear. He knew when he left his camp on June 25 that he was setting out on a raid, not simply seeking the best route north to rejoin Lee's army.

His motivation is not clear, but it may be true that his loss of face at Brandy Station contributed to his desire to "strike a blow." Or he may well have had such intentions even before Brandy Station, and Mosby's growing influence on Stuart certainly comes into this picture. But taking a larger view, undertaking a bold raid perhaps requires no special explanation or justification for Stuart at this point in his career. Each of his past triumphs called for a new and greater one.

Stuart headed due east, and even his original plan called for crossing the Potomac much farther east than Lee expected. His reaction to the enforced detour is the first of several strong pieces of evidences that the raid was uppermost in his mind. For encountering

the Union forces on the move was certainly a “hindrance,” and the route he was being driven to take could not have been rationalized as a shortcut to meet Lee north of the river. His reaction showed that the raid was uppermost in his mind. If he could not go north or east, he would go south and then east. Even Mosby was surprised by this audacity.

The detour caused by the Federal movements proved useful for Stuart later on, because it provided him with a plausible explanation for why he had ventured so far east from the right flank of the army, which he had been instructed to “feel” after crossing the river.

The second strong indication that Stuart saw himself as on a raid, rather than simply seeking the best way to rejoin Lee, is that after crossing at Rowser’s Ford, he turned east toward Rockville and Washington instead of west toward the Cumberland Valley. He made no effort to scout and locate Meade’s forces and gather useful intelligence but instead headed deeper into enemy territory.

More revealing yet as an indicator of Stuart’s mind-set was his conduct of the ride north. Capturing the famous wagons was the act of a raider, not a cavalry scout. His encounter with Kilpatrick in Hanover should have been a clear sign to Stuart that the armies were on the move and a fight was brewing. He knew that Meade was across the river and that Lee and the army were to his west. He would soon be needed with the army. He should have burned the wagons and cut his way through Kilpatrick’s troops to rejoin Lee, who was only twenty miles away. Instead, protective of his spoils, he turned away from the impending battle and continued his solitary raid still farther.

To sum up, Lee gave Stuart the discretion to choose his own route because he trusted him to use the good sense and judgment he had displayed in all earlier expeditions. In this case Stuart violated that trust, as he violated the spirit if not the letter of his orders.

Second, Stuart’s and McClellan’s accounts of the missing “third order” authorizing Stuart to do everything he did are not to be believed. Stuart almost certainly received only two orders from Lee,

the second arriving late on the night of June 23, and this order did give general approval for a movement “east” of the Blue Ridge, but nothing more. The existence of the missing order containing a detailed authorization for the lengthy raid rests entirely on Stuart’s words and McClellan’s account, written long after the fact to support those words, and it is implausible and contradictory.

Longstreet was in error when he wrote in his covering note to Stuart about Lee’s having spoken of Hopewell Gap. Lee almost certainly never made such a suggestion, since it would not have led Stuart where Lee wanted him to be. Longstreet must have been painfully aware, after the fact, that his inaccurate note lent encouragement to Stuart’s actions, and this explains his contradictory and somewhat less than honest postwar efforts to distance himself from them.

Third, Stuart did not execute his command responsibilities as the army cavalry commander. He failed to take charge of Jenkins in the van, left an officer he did not trust in command of the units guarding the rear of the army, and then gave orders imprecise enough to allow that officer not to be available as and when Lee had requested. He failed to provide the army with screening and intelligence—a role he understood well, since he had excelled at it in all earlier campaigns—when Lee had every reason to expect it of him. Stuart was the commander of all the army’s cavalry and should have been thinking in these terms. Instead, Stuart’s entire attention was focused on the planned raid, not the campaign of the army.

The famous missing message, in which Stuart was supposed to have warned Lee that Hooker was crossing the Potomac as soon as he learned this himself, probably was never sent. Stuart waited instead until he could triumphantly report looting the Union depot at Fairfax in a message that was pointless and worthless to Lee. Stuart the raider had temporarily displaced Stuart the cavalry leader.

Fourth, Stuart took a great, totally needless risk with the cream of Lee’s cavalry by casually planning to ride through the heart of a vastly superior Federal army. Mosby’s contempt for the Federal forces nearly led Stuart into disaster. Had the three Federal corps

he was riding “through” not been on the move, they might well have caught up with him as he attempted to cross the river and totally destroyed his force. The movement of the Federal units, which is usually presented as bad luck for Stuart, turned out to be a blessing, since it pushed him farther to their rear and led most of the Union commanders to ignore him.

Stuart had a very near thing in the fight at Hanover. He was unaware that Gregg was pursuing him, and only luck prevented another clash. Had the Union cavalry been better managed, and had there been any communication between Gregg and Kilpatrick, Stuart would almost certainly have suffered a devastating defeat. The cavalry of Lee’s army survived Stuart’s raid, but only narrowly.

Fifth, the “plan” to meet Early in York was a fabrication by Stuart, after the fact, and is at odds with all other accounts and recollections as well as the logic of the way events unfolded. For the most part, Stuart rode aimlessly north, with no real plan, hoping to run into Lee eventually. In the end, Lee found him as much as he found Lee.

Sixth, the absence of Stuart and the Confederate cavalry played a crucial role in the development of the campaign and in the early stage of the actual battle. Strategically, Lee did not know where his enemy was and was disconcerted when Meade suddenly appeared in full force only a day’s march away. Meade, by contrast, was well served by his cavalry and his intelligence service and knew precisely where Lee was. Lee planned a daring campaign of rapid movement, and he had every reason to think his cavalry’s demonstrated skills at screening and scouting would contribute mightily to a favorable outcome, just as it had in his earlier campaigns. As events unfolded, Stuart’s absence and the lack of good intelligence led Lee to fight a confused and uncertain battle on the first day.

Tactically, the absence of a cavalry screen in front of Heth and Pender as they pushed into Gettysburg led to needless casualties and subsequent disorganization of the Confederate units later in the day. Ewell’s timidity at pushing onto the heights before him was

at least partly due to his concern over the unknown Union strength there. As late as the second day of the battle, Lee did not know the precise lay of the land or what his tactical options were, and he had to use staff officers for reconnaissance.

Lee must have thought wistfully of how different the first day's battle might have been had Stuart been there to report on the Chambersburg road with his usual precise and accurate account of the situation confronting the army in Gettysburg. Surely the army (and Lee) did miss Stuart and his cavalry.

Seventh, Stuart's raid made him very late on the battlefield at Gettysburg and reduced the effectiveness of the cavalry so much that it could not make a real contribution to the battle on the third day. Stuart's orders that day probably were to press the Union right flank, so as to draw strength away from the center where Pickett was attacking, and to be prepared to exploit a Confederate breakthrough if one occurred. Because he had no time to spare, Stuart failed to achieve surprise, and his mission was a failure from the start. The execution was half-hearted and disorganized, and the Union cavalry did most of the attacking. The whole fight was brief and went almost unnoticed by the Union command. This action was perhaps the low point of Stuart's field career.

All this said, it is by no means clear that this cavalry action—even had Stuart vigorously pursued it—would have changed the outcome of the battle. But it was not vigorously pursued, and a “what if” must remain.

These conclusions seem to emerge from the record. They do not constitute a moral indictment of Stuart, nor do they in any way tarnish his many other notable accomplishments as a military leader. But these conclusions cannot be ignored. The record also confirms Lee's ultimate responsibility for the outcome. Lee thought Stuart knew what was expected of him and did not worry over how he went about it. Had Lee's orders been more precise—had he ruled out the route east of the Bull Run Ridge or explicitly stated a date by which Stuart was to rejoin the army—presumably either Stuart

would have given up his raid and followed them or else Lee, after the battle, would have reluctantly agreed with Marshall that Stuart had to be formally disciplined. As it was, Lee could not honestly say that Stuart violated his orders or consider any formal reprimand.

Stuart undertook a bold, risky adventure that contributed nothing to Lee's objectives in the campaign, but it did seem to be within the discretion granted him. Lee had misjudged one of his favorite lieutenants. No doubt Lee shook his head in disappointment and puzzlement. All he could do later was to state the blunt truth—that matters might have turned out better had Stuart been where he was supposed to be. It seems hard to quarrel with this conclusion.

### **The Judgment of Others on Gettysburg**

Probably everyone who has ever thought for a moment about Gettysburg has an opinion about why Lee lost. Douglas Southall Freeman devoted a long annex to the question in his magisterial biography of Lee and concluded that five factors contributed to the defeat; but Stuart's absence headed the list.<sup>1</sup>

Many former Confederates had their own opinions, and nearly all published them. Among the most interesting were those in a special issue of the *Southern Historical Society Papers* in 1877 devoted to "the cause of Lee's defeat at Gettysburg, with contributions by many who actually participated in the battle." There does seem to have emerged a consensus, from different ranks and different elements of the army, about the importance of the absence of Stuart and the cavalry. Tom Rosser, himself a cavalryman, wrote, "Stuart was a cavalry general of great ability, and of exceptional enterprise, courage and energy . . . [but] he was like all other men, human and liable to err, and did, in my opinion on this campaign, undoubtedly, make the fatal blunder which lost us the battle of Gettysburg."<sup>2</sup>

Harry Heth agreed strongly with this judgment: "The failure to crush the Federal army in Pennsylvania in 1863, in the opinion of almost all the officers of the Army of Northern Virginia, can be expressed in five words—the absence of our cavalry."<sup>3</sup>



Fitzhugh Lee listed three factors that contributed to the defeat: the absence of the cavalry; the failure to press the attack on the first day; and Longstreet's delay in reaching his position and launching his attack on the second day. But reasons two and three were directly linked to the absence of the army's usual cavalry scouts to provide intelligence and lead the way. So the absence of the cavalry is linked to all three factors. In his discussion of these points, Fitzhugh Lee makes it clear that he agrees with this interpretation. The absence of the cavalry was the key factor.<sup>4</sup>

Edward P. Alexander also weighed in on this question in his memoirs: "Yet in my humble opinion, it was bad play to let our cavalry to get out of touch & reach of our infantry . . . I think Hooker's defeat was due to the absence of his cavalry on just such a useless raid as this. We ought to have recognized Hooker's error and avoided repeating it. I cannot say exactly what would have happened, but our force at hand at the opening of the fight would have been greater and that might easily have changed the whole result."<sup>5</sup>

G. Moxley Sorrel expressed a similar conclusion: "It is not to be supposed that no cavalry whatever was left with the army. There was a squadron or two, here and there, and a regiment [or so]. But these separate little commands amounted to nothing. It was the great body of that splendid horse under their leader Stuart that Lee wanted. He was the eyes and ears and strong right arm of the commander, and well may he have missed them. All through the marches he showed it."<sup>6</sup> He also made special note of the poor condition of Stuart's men and their mounts when they rejoined the army.

Gen. Sir Frederick Maurice, a close student of the Civil War and the editor of Marshall's memoirs, saw two possible outcomes to the campaign with Stuart present, both favorable for the South:

Had Stuart been present on June 30, either Gettysburg would have fallen to Hill and the Federal Corps would have been defeated in detail, or more probably the battle would have been fought on the South Mountain with Meade forced to attack in order to save

Washington and Baltimore. Longstreet would have realized his dream of forcing . . . offensive tactics on the Federals, and the course of the war would probably have been vastly changed . . . For on June 30, alarm in the North at the invasion of Pennsylvania was at its height, and it has, I think, been truly said that the Confederacy was never nearer the peace it desired than at the end of June 1863.<sup>7</sup>

Fitzhugh Lee agreed that Stuart's absence made a difference in where the battle developed: "As soon as the Federal army began to cross the river, he should have marched to the west side of the Blue Ridge, crossed also, and moving rapidly to General Lee's front, have placed himself in direct communication with him. His bold activity would have developed the enemy's position, which, General Lee being no longer in ignorance of, could then have made his plans accordingly. In that event, in all probability, the battle would not have taken place at Gettysburg."<sup>8</sup>

In other words, having good intelligence about Meade's whereabouts, Lee could have fought the battle using a totally different scenario. He could have lured Meade into an attack on ground of his own choosing, defeated him, and then launched a crushing counter-attack led by his cavalry. This battle might have taken place in Gettysburg, along the South Mountains, or on the banks of the Susquehanna. Such a battle would have been risky, as indeed Gettysburg was risky. Russell Weigley points out, "[Even] if Lee had won at Gettysburg, his ammunition would have been nearly exhausted in victory, while the Federal logistics would have been improved as the Army of the Potomac fell back towards the eastern cities. Lee had to stake the whole campaign on one battle, the Federals did not."<sup>9</sup> These logistical considerations meant that a Confederate victory had to be a smashing one, and this is what Lee dreamed of achieving.

All this discussion proceeds from implicit premise that somehow the Confederacy should have won and that it is the losing that requires an explanation. But we must remember Pickett's reply when



FIGURE 20. The Union cavalry attacks the Confederate rear guard at Falling Waters, in one of the only incidents in which Stuart's cavalry did not successfully shield the retreat. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

asked why Gettysburg was lost: "I always supposed the Yankees had something to do with it."<sup>10</sup> The Army of the Potomac fought well and might have repulsed or defeated Lee even with Stuart present. But Stuart's absence gave the Union an edge that may have made the difference.

It is also important to remember that the Gettysburg campaign was, from the outset, an enormous gamble for the Confederacy. The whole idea of the campaign by Lee (like the raid by Stuart) reflected huge overconfidence by the Confederates. Lee made the costly mistake of underestimating his opponent, and this may also have been part of why he did not concern himself with the details of Stuart's expedition. Stephen Sears puts it very well: "The very concept of Stuart's expedition was fueled by over-confidence and misjudgment at the highest command level."<sup>11</sup>

### **How the Campaign Might Have Unfolded**

Let us imagine the situation at Gettysburg had Stuart not vanished on his raid but instead been with the army, scouting east of it where Lee had intended him to be. Lee would have known by June 27 that the Union force was across the Potomac and also that it appeared to be assembling in the Frederick area. By June 28 Stuart would have learned, and informed Lee, that the Union army was on the move but spread out, with two corps (First and Eleventh) moving through Emmitsburg toward Gettysburg, three other corps (Second, Third, and Twelfth) also moving north but farther to the east through Taneytown, and two (Fifth and Sixth) even farther east heading toward Manchester and Union Mills. Meade was probing for Lee, with two corps in his first line to the west, three in support, and two more in deep support. His second echelon (the Second, Third, and Twelfth Corps) were in the vicinity of Pipe Creek, and Meade had already decided to withdraw behind this barrier if Lee strongly attacked him. His tactical development was good, with the several wings of his army far enough apart to avoid congesting the roads but close enough to aid one another if need be. But it was a

cautious, essentially defensive approach, well east of the Cumberland Valley where he knew Lee was. Meade had none of Hooker's aggressive desire to attack Lee's rear over the mountains.

Knowing the Union positions even approximately, Lee would have seen their vulnerability on the march and would have known exactly how to fight the battle. He would have seen a tempting opportunity to strike Meade along the following lines: Let Ewell consolidate his corps and move south from York to catch the head of the Union van around Gettysburg, while Hill's corps drove into the Union forces there from Chambersburg to the west. Longstreet's corps would hook to the south and west through Waynesboro and Emmitsburg to take the enemy in the flank and rear. Stuart, with a total of six brigades under his command (including Jenkins, Jones, and Robertson, leaving Imboden to the west as a rear guard), would provide powerful cavalry scouts for all three columns and shield the advance from any cavalry screen Meade might throw out.

On July 1 Ewell and Hill (with six divisions rather than four) would have quickly crushed the Union First and Eleventh Corps in Gettysburg and driven them back in confusion, into the Second and Twelfth Corps. Longstreet would have taken the Third Corps in the flank on the march and sent it reeling eastward. This is a scenario others have seen, and G. F. R. Henderson argued, "It is evident that had Lee's army been more concentrated, which it would have been had he received early information of Hooker's march northward, he would have been able to seize Gettysburg and inflict an annihilating defeat on the two corps which formed the Federal advance guard."<sup>12</sup>

On the next day the combined Southern Army would have plunged on toward Littlestown to prevent the Second and Twelfth Corps from allowing the other units to rally. At that moment the battle would have been over, and Meade, with three of his seven corps badly mauled and two others under strong pressure, would have had no choice but to fall back, probably to Pipe Creek, where he had been planning to stand if need be. Without demeaning his very fine showing in the defensive battle, Meade's handling of Lee's

withdrawal, after the actual battle, showed clearly that he had no taste for a freewheeling battle of maneuver with Lee. Lee almost certainly would have pressed his beaten enemy, and the rest of Meade's army might well have fallen back all the way to Washington to seek refuge behind the fortifications there. A vigorous pursuit by Lee, using cavalry in this role for the first time, might have indeed achieved a rout. Either way, Lee would have had a free hand. After resting a few days and resupplying his army, he could have moved east to threaten Baltimore and Washington or returned to his northward march on Harrisburg.

There is evidence that precisely this scenario was in Lee's mind well before the battle. Lee studied maps of Maryland and Pennsylvania and told two of his staff officers he thought it highly likely that a great battle would take place. Gen. Isaac Trimble, who was recovering from a wound and was attached to Lee's staff in an unofficial capacity, later remembered a conversation with Lee on June 27 that showed Lee was highly optimistic about the campaign:

Our army is in good spirits, not over-fatigued, and can be concentrated on any one point in twenty-four hours or less. I have not yet heard that the enemy have crossed the Potomac and am waiting to hear from General Stuart. When they hear where we are, they will make forced marches to interpose their forces between us and Baltimore and Philadelphia. They will come up, probably through Frederick, broken down with hunger and hard marching, strung out on a long line, and much demoralized when they come into Pennsylvania. I shall throw an overwhelming force on their advance, crush it, follow up the success, drive one corps back on another, and by successive repulses and surprises, before they can concentrate, create a panic and virtually destroy the army.<sup>13</sup>

Not long before launching the Gettysburg campaign, Lee outlined a similar, but slightly different, plan to Col. A. L. Long, one of his staff officers. Long had proposed a new attack somewhere in the vicinity of the old battlefield of Manassas:

To this idea General Lee objected, and stated as his reason for opposing it, that no results of decisive value to the Confederate States could come from a victory in that locality. The Federal army, if defeated, would fall back to the defenses of Washington, as on previous occasions, where it could reorganize in safety and again take the field in full force . . . in his view, the best course would be to invade Pennsylvania, penetrating this state in the direction of Chambersburg, York or Gettysburg. He might be forced to give battle at one or the other of these places as circumstances might suggest, but, in his view, Gettysburg was much the best point, as it was less distant from his base on the Potomac . . . there was in his mind no thought of reaching Philadelphia . . . Yet he was satisfied that the Federal army, if defeated in a pitched battle, would be seriously disorganized . . . and it would very likely cause the fall of Washington city and the flight of the Federal government.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Possible Results of a Victory**

The impact of the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg was profound. Whatever influence present-day scholarship thinks Gettysburg had on the outcome of the war, most of those alive at the time had no doubt about it. "In London, the news of Gettysburg and Vicksburg gave the coup de grace to Confederate hopes for recognition," while Union hopes soared to a new high. "In Washington," one observer wrote, "I never knew such excitement."<sup>15</sup> But this impact was mainly psychological, since the war dragged on for two more years.

Lee had to be banking on a similar, but opposite, psychological effect from his victory when it was won. The most extreme imaginable outcome of a great Confederate victory at Gettysburg would have been the destruction of the Army of the Potomac as an effective fighting force. Had Lee achieved this, he would have gained a free hand in Maryland-Pennsylvania-Delaware. But had the North continued to fight, this Confederate advantage would have been temporary and precarious. The Union could have shifted six to eight

full army corps from operations in the west and the Carolina coast to create a formidable new field army in the middle Atlantic region, these new corps all in addition to other regular units not involved at Gettysburg—from Washington, Baltimore, and elsewhere. Traveling by train and ship, these reinforcements could have presented Lee with the uncertain prospect of fighting an even larger Union army some few weeks later. Almost certainly this was not what Lee had in mind. He was gambling that the North would not continue to fight, that Gettysburg would be the last great battle of the war.

Lee believed that a really great Union defeat might well bring such political pressure on Lincoln that he would give up and negotiate peace. Pressure was, in fact, already building: “Since the Emancipation Proclamation ten states [including the key Republican states of Pennsylvania, New York, Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois] held elections. In 1860 Lincoln had a majority in them of 200,000, now he lost them by 35,000. In 1860 [these states sent to Congress] 78 Republicans and 37 Democrats, while in 1862 51 Republicans and 67 Democrats. Many were bitterly opposed to the war.”<sup>16</sup>

It was these electoral numbers that led Lincoln to tell his cabinet in mid-1863 that he did not expect to be reelected. So how would Lincoln have reacted to a defeat at Gettysburg? We cannot be sure. Possibly Lincoln himself was not sure. But he was a politician, after all, who was “driven by events.” He was making war to save the Union, but if that was no longer possible then why continue the war?

This was the outcome Lee and Davis were gambling on. There is the strong supporting evidence that Jefferson Davis expected the campaign would lead to such an outcome. The Confederate vice president, Alexander Stephens, had been chosen as the Confederate peace emissary, and he was waiting near Richmond to go by boat to Washington and discuss a truce with Lincoln. Nominally, this was to have been a meeting to talk about prisoner exchanges, but Stephens was clear that he was to seek a truce and open talks about ending the war. He was an old friend of Lincoln’s and a former



Whig colleague from the House of Representatives, uniquely qualified among the Confederate leadership to undertake such a mission. Davis had originally planned that Stephens would accompany the army north, but he balked at this, insisting on a separate meeting in a nonbelligerent setting, and he stayed in Richmond awaiting word from Lee. When the South lost at Gettysburg, the meeting never took place.<sup>17</sup>

All this could have happened had Lee and his army been given the intelligence they needed to fight the battle they were capable of fighting. Lee accepted blame for the defeat, but he continued to believe the battle could have been won.

No blame can be attached to the army for its failure to accomplish what was projected by me, nor should it be censured for the unreasonable expectations of the public. I alone am to blame, in perhaps expecting too much of its prowess and valour. It however in my opinion achieved under the guidance of the Most High a general success though it did not win a victory. I thought at the time that the latter was practicable. I still think that if all things could have worked together it would have been accomplished. But, with the knowledge I then had, and in the circumstances I was placed, I do not know what better course I could have pursued.<sup>18</sup>

Lee never got to fight his great battle of maneuver and annihilation. Gettysburg was his worst battle, and when defeat loomed, he had to try to save the situation using the desperate raw courage of his soldiers. When this failed, so did Lee and so did the Confederate cause.

# Notes

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## Preface

1. As an electronic-age indicator of fame, consider the following: when a widely used Internet search engine was asked to find references to “Jeb Stuart,” it reported: “Your search retrieved more records than can be displayed. Only the first ten thousand will be shown.” A search for “Gettysburg” found just over two thousand citations.

2. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, general editor Robert N. Scott, 128 parts in 70 vols. and atlas (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1881–1901), preface to the general index and additions and corrections, 10. (All later references to this source will be simply *OR*.)

As is well known, the *Official Record* is divided into four major “series,” comprising a total of 70 “volumes” that make up 128 “parts.” The record of the Gettysburg campaign is largely in series I, volume 27, parts 1–3. My citations are thus to I, 27, part —, pages —. A full description of the contents and organization of the entire work appears in the introduction to the *OR*.

## 1. The Background to Gettysburg

1. Alan T. Nolan is clear about this: “It is in the context of grand strategy that one must view the primary issue regarding Gettysburg: that is, whether Lee should have been there at all.” See “R. E. Lee and July 1 at Gettysburg,” in *The First Day at Gettysburg*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 1992), 10. Nolan triggered this latest “revisionist” reconsideration of Lee with his 1991 book *Lee Considered: General Robert E. Lee and Civil War History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). The same criticisms were advanced much earlier by other authors, notably Thomas L. Connelly, *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); J. F. C. Fuller, *Grant and Lee: A Study in Personality and Generalship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957); and George A. Bruce, “The Strategy of the Civil War,” in *Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1916). These critical works and others arguing in defense of Lee are excerpted and discussed in Gary W. Gallagher’s very useful *Lee the Soldier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). Gallagher also undertakes a balanced assessment of the arguments pro and con.

2. Clifford Dowdey and Louis H. Manarin, eds., *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), 508.

3. Richard Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still Jr., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 9.

4. See Charles W. Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines in the Southern Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944); Henry Steel Commager, ed., *The Blue and the Gray* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), 741-68; John C. Schwab, *The Confederate States of America: A Financial and Industrial History of the South during the Civil War* (New York: Scribner's, 1901); and more recently, Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

5. On the poor fiscal and financial management by the central government that led to the hyperinflation, see Douglas B. Ball, *Financial Failure and Confederate Defeat* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Robert C. Todd, *Confederate Finance* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954); and Eugene M. Lerner, "The Monetary and Fiscal Programs of the Confederate Government, 1861-1865," *Journal of Political Economy* 62, no. 4 (1954): 506-22. On the opposition of the states, see Frank L. Owsley, *State Rights in the Confederacy*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931).

6. Allan Nevins's sweeping history of the Civil War devotes an entire chapter to "The Great Boom in the North." See *The War for the Union*, 3 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1971), 3:212-70. See also Emerson D. Fite, *Social and Industrial Conditions in the North during the Civil War* (New York: Frederick Unger, 1963).

7. See the citations in Steven E. Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 299.

8. These debates culminated in meetings between Lee and Davis and his cabinet in mid-May. They are described in detail in Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: Scribner's, 1984), chap. 1, and Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command*, 3 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1942-44), vol. 3, chap. 1. Several recent volumes also contain excellent accounts, most notably Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War*, chap. 6, and Michael A. Palmer, *Lee Moves North* (New York: John Wiley, 1998), chap. 2.

9. The New York rally, sponsored by New York mayor Fernando Wood and other "peace democrats," took place on June 3 and drew a large crowd and many prominent speakers. "The meeting exceeded Wood's fondest hopes . . . the crowd was immense." Jerome Mushkat, *Fernando Wood* (Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 1990), 137.

10. Gallagher argues that, in fact, the South came close to breaking the North's will to fight several times during the war, the last time as late as early 1865. See Gallagher, *Confederate War*, 116. McPherson identifies four "major turning points, points of contingency when events moved in one direction but could well have moved in another," one of which was the outcome of the Gettysburg campaign. See James M. McPherson, "Was the Best Defense a Good Offense? Jefferson Davis and Confederate Strategies," in *Jefferson Davis's Generals*, ed. Gabor Borrit (New York:

Oxford University Press, 1999), 40. McPherson adds, “The will of the Northern or Southern people was primarily a result of military victory rather than a cause of it.”

11. See James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 650–51. McPherson quotes a Confederate agent in England: “Everybody looks to Lee to conquer recognition.”

12. Joseph L. Harsh, *Confederate Tide Rising: Robert E. Lee and the Making of Southern Strategy, 1861–1862* (Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 2001), 5.

13. Harsh, *Confederate Tide Rising*, chap. 1.

14. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Civil War in the United States* (New York: International Publishing House, 1974).

15. See, for example, William C. Davis, *Look Away! A History of the Confederate States of America* (New York: Free Press, 1996), chap. 1. Davis also uses the word “oligarchs.” Shelby Foote, an admirer of Jefferson Davis, strongly supports the notion that to most Southern politicians, including Davis, “nationalism” meant expansion into Mexico and the Caribbean as well as the southwest. See Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1958, 1974), 1:13–15. See also Avery O. Craven, *Civil War in the Making, 1815–1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959).

16. Harsh, *Confederate Tide Rising*, chap. 1; Gallagher, *Confederate War*, 116–39; Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan, eds., *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), introduction and chap. 1. The organized Confederate efforts, operating from Canada, to launch raids on the United States, certainly had Davis’s approval. And there is at least some evidence that Davis encouraged experiments with what would now be called “weapons of mass destruction” to create outbreaks of yellow fever in Northern cities. See Edward Steers, “Risking the Wrath of God,” *North and South* 3, no. 7 (2000): 59–73. Yellow fever is surely a very offensive defensive weapon.

17. David Donald, “Died of Democracy,” in *Why the North Won the Civil War*, ed. David Donald (New York: Collier, 1960), 79–90. See also Owsley, *State Rights in the Confederacy*, chaps. 1 and 2.

18. See Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War*, and William C. Davis, “Lee and Jefferson Davis,” in Gallagher, *Lee the Soldier*, 291–305. The Lee-Davis relationship has been cited as a model of how a military leader should interact with civilian authority. See Frederick Maurice, *Governments and War: A Study of the Conduct of War* (London: William Heinemann, 1926).

19. Palmer, *Lee Moves North*, 49–55.

20. Most authors have concluded that Davis and Lee were in basic agreement and formed a “powerful team.” See McPherson, “Was the Best Defense a Good Offense?” 156–76, and the other works cited there. But Woodworth and Emory Thomas disagree and are persuaded that Davis did in fact favor a defensive strategy while Lee was the risk taker. See Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War*, chap. 6, and Emory Thomas, “Ambivalent Visions of Victory: Davis, Lee and Confederate Grand Strategy,” in *Jefferson Davis’s Generals*, ed. Gabor Boritt (New York: Oxford Univer-

sity Press, 1999), 27–45. Woodworth argues that Lee may have been less than frank about his intentions in the Gettysburg campaign, since Davis later seemed surprised that Lee showed no concern over guarding his supply or communications links after crossing the Potomac. This seems to be a matter of nuance, not real disagreement.

21. See Thomas Schott, *Alexander Stephens of Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 176–79.

22. Thomas, “Ambivalent Visions of Victory,” 31, describes Lee’s goal as “a battle of annihilation.” Peter Carmichael has also examined the question in “Lee’s Quest for the Battle of Annihilation,” *North and South* 3, no. 5 (2000): 53–59.

23. Douglas Southall Freeman, *R. E. Lee: A Biography*, 4 vols. (New York: Scribner’s, 1934), 3:57–59. Longstreet’s contributions to the postmortems on Gettysburg are discussed in a later chapter.

24. See “Postwar Account of Major General Isaac Ridgeway Trimble,” in *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ed. Janet Hewett, Noah Andre Trudeau, and Bryce A. Suderow (Wilmington NC: Broadfoot, 1994), part 1, 5:434–36 (Trimble’s account was also published in *Southern Historical Society Papers* 26:121); and A. L. Long, *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee: His Military and Personal History* (New York: Stoddart, 1886), 177–78. These conversations are also discussed at some length in a later chapter.

25. Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War*, 238.

## 2. Opening Moves of the Campaign

1. The narrative account in this chapter is based on the official record and the numerous excellent summaries of the Gettysburg campaign available in the secondary literature, most particularly Coddington’s masterful campaign summary. Since most of these matters of names, dates, and locations are not in dispute, I document only direct quotations, newly available source material, or interpretations thereof.

2. See Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, chaps. 3 and 4; Steven E. Woodworth, *Beneath a Northern Sky: A Short History of the Gettysburg Campaign* (Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003), chap. 1; Stephen Sears, *Gettysburg* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), chap. 1; and Scott Bowden and Bill Ward, *Last Chance for Victory: Robert E. Lee and the Gettysburg Campaign* (El Dorado Hills CA: Savas, 2001), chap. 2.

3. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 38–39.

4. Emory Thomas, *Bold Dragoon: The Life of J. E. B. Stuart* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 216–17. Perhaps the most detailed and colorful description of Stuart’s review is still that by Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee’s Lieutenants*, 3:1–5; see also Burke Davis, *Jeb Stuart: The Last Cavalier* (New York: Rinehart, 1958), 302–5. Freeman’s works on Lee and his generals have recently suffered the neglect eventually accorded to all classics. Some recent authors charge him with being too “pro-Lee” or “pro-Confederate.” One cannot doubt that Freeman greatly admired Lee, as many biographers admire their subjects, but most scholars for a long time accepted his historical research as meticulous and objective. Being unaware that any recent research has produced evidence to the contrary, I take his work seriously and use him as a source.

5. Eric Wittenberg's *The Union Cavalry Comes of Age* (Washington DC: Brassey's, 2003) is the definitive statement of the importance of Brandy Station in this evolution of the Union cavalry. He writes, "The climax on Fleetwood Hill marked the end of the 'coming out party' for the Army of the Potomac's cavalry corps . . . major victories lay ahead" (311). See also Edward G. Longacre, *Lincoln's Cavalrymen* (Mechanicsburg PA: Stackpole Books, 2000), chaps. 12 and 13, and Edward G. Longacre, *Lee's Cavalrymen* (Mechanicsburg PA: Stackpole Books, 2002), 334–38.

6. Freeman quotes several critical comments in the Southern press including the *Richmond Examiner*, which Stuart almost certainly read. Stuart saw to it that an anonymous letter of rebuttal was sent to the paper in question. See Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 3:333; Also Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 310–12. Grand reviews seem to have been bad luck for the cavalry on both sides. Hooker arranged a similar, if less flamboyant, review of his reorganized cavalry corps for Lincoln shortly before his defeat at Chancellorsville, in which his mounted arm played no useful role.

7. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 119–21.

8. Coddington describes the remount problem of Stuart's cavalry very well. "The difficulty of securing new mounts was compounded by the government's failure to set up a centralized replacement service . . . Whenever a trooper found himself dismounted, he had to go home to find a new horse. If he were a Virginian, he need from thirty to sixty days to accomplish his purpose and a much longer time should he have come from the deeper South" (Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 17; see also Longacre, *Lee's Cavalrymen*, 42–44). Similarly, there was no logistical support supplying feed for the animals or new tack and equipment. The North's success in creating such a system is well described in Eric J. Wittenberg, "Learning the Hard Lessons of Logistics," *North and South* 2, no. 2 (1999): 62–78.

9. See Stephen A. Ambrose, *Halleck: Lincoln's Chief of Staff* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), 134.

10. Fishel documents in some detail the large volume of "human intelligence" that was being sent to Halleck almost daily. See Edwin C. Fishel, *The Secret War for the Union: The Untold Story of Military Intelligence in the Civil War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996). Some of these messages are alluded to, but not reproduced, in the *Official Record*. See *or*, I, 27, 2:826, for example.

11. *OR*, I, 27, 1:31.

12. *OR*, I, 27, 1:53.

13. *OR*, I, 27, 1:34. Lincoln was evidently ambivalent about Hooker's best course of action and nursed an offensive inclination of his own. He wrote another memorable, much-quoted letter to Hooker pointing out Lee's vulnerability on the march. "If the head of Lee's army is at Martinsburg and the tail on the road between Fredericksburg and Culpeper, the animal must be very slim somewhere. Could you not hurt him?" (*OR*, I, 27, 1:39).

14. Fishel, *Secret War*, chaps. 23 and 24; see also *OR*, I, 27, 1:65.

15. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 97.

16. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, chaps. 4 and 5; see also map 1.

17. OR, I, 27, 2:292.
18. Freeman Cleavis, *Meade of Gettysburg* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 122.
19. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 128; Vincent J. Esposito, *West Point Atlas of American Wars* (New York: Praeger, 1959), map 94, notes, “He appears to have been planning an operation against Lee’s line of communication but had issued no definite orders.”
20. Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army* (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1901), 393.
21. Ambrose, *Halleck*, 134–36.
22. Howard, *Autobiography*, 391.
23. Walter H. Hebert, *Fighting Joe Hooker*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 229.
24. J. W. Fortney, ed., *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 3 vols. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1865), 2:169–74.
25. Fortney, *Report of the Joint Committee*, 177.
26. Howard, *Autobiography*, 397.
27. George A. Rummel, *Cavalry on the Roads to Gettysburg: Kilpatrick at Hanover and Hunterstown* (Shippensburg PA: White Mane, 2000), 145.
28. In the recent literature Eicher continues this tradition. See David J. Eicher, *The Longest Night: A Military History of the Civil War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 510: “The battle of Gettysburg . . . began primarily as an accident.”

### 3. Stuart, Lee, and the Role of the Cavalry

1. Freeman, *Lee’s Lieutenants*, 346.
2. Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 23.
3. Stuart’s father-in-law was Gen. Phillip St. George Cooke. Cooke commanded the Union cavalry in the battles around Richmond and was sent in pursuit of Stuart on his first ride-around of the Union army. The Cookes were an old Virginia family, as were the Stuarts.
4. OR I, 36, 3:800.
5. Robert E. Lee Jr., ed., *Recollections and Letters of General Robert E. Lee* (New York: Garden City, 1926), 124. Also Freeman, *Lee’s Lieutenants*, 3:492.
6. For example, at the battle of Murfreesboro in December 1862, a false report by his cavalry that Union reinforcements were approaching led Bragg to withdraw when he was on the verge of winning a major victory. See Thomas L. Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 46–47 and 51–52. This shortcoming of the Confederate cavalry outside Virginia is developed by Andrew Houghton, *Training, Tactics and Leadership in the Confederate Army of Tennessee: Seeds of Failure* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 110. Joseph Wheeler’s manual, *A Revised System of Cavalry Tactics for the Use of the Cavalry and Mounted Infantry of the Confederate States*, 3 vols. (Mobile AL: Goetzell, 1863), was widely used for training in the Army of Tennessee.

7. Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 132-34.
8. Dowdey and Manarin, *Wartime Papers*, 277.
9. Dowdey and Manarin, *Wartime Papers*, 314-16.
10. Dowdey and Manarin, *Wartime Papers*, 374.
11. Dowdey and Manarin, *Wartime Papers*, 470-71.
12. Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 58.
13. Emory Thomas, "Eggs, Aldie, Shepherdstown and J. E. B. Stuart," in *The Gettysburg Nobody Knows*, ed. Gabor Boritt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 103. See also Fishel, *Secret War*, chap. 10.
14. Douglas S. Freeman, "The Sword of Robert E. Lee," in *Lee the Soldier*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 144.
15. Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 72.
16. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 1:277-78.
17. Dowdey and Manarin, *Wartime Papers*, 212.
18. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 2:284-85.
19. David Gregg McIntosh, "Review of the Gettysburg Campaign by One Who Took Part Therein," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 37 (1909): 87.
20. Howard, *Autobiography*, 380.
21. His staff included a former Prussian officer, Heros von Borcke, who later wrote a memoir of his experiences. Borcke and Stuart were particularly close. See Heros von Borcke, *Memoirs of the Confederate War for Independence* (New York: Peter Smith, 1938).
22. Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 70.
23. Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 211.
24. Longacre, *Lee's Cavalrymen*, 62; see also Thomas, *Bold Dragoon*, 310-15.
25. See J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 304. Many thought the author of the letter was Stuart himself.
26. Virgil Carrington Jones, *Ranger Mosby* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 145.
27. Mosby became Stuart's stoutest defender in the debates that followed the war. This is discussed at length in a later chapter.
28. Thomas, *Bold Dragoon*, 255.

#### 4. Lee's Orders before Gettysburg

1. Clayton R. Newell, *Lee vs. McClellan: The First Campaign* (Washington DC: Regnery, 1996), 263. See also Fuller, *Grant and Lee*, 195. Nearly all accounts of Lee's style of command note this trait. See Gallagher, *Lee the Soldier*, especially the several assessments of his overall generalship in part 2, 37-291.
2. Newell, *Lee vs. McClellan*, 232-33.
3. OR, I, 27, 3:914.
4. OR, I, 27, 3:913.
5. Connelly, *Marble Man*, 49.



6. Charles Marshall, *An Aide-de-Camp of Lee (Being the Papers of Col. Charles Marshall, Sometime Aide-de-Camp, Military Secretary and Assistant Adjutant-General on the Staff of Robert E. Lee, 1862–1865)*, ed. Frederick Maurice (Boston: Little, Brown, 1927), 201–2. Freeman suggests that Stuart and Lee met in person at least twice, on June 19 and again on June 21. See *Lee's Lieutenants*, 3:41n58.

7. OR, I, 27, 3:914–15.

8. OR, I, 27, 3:915.

9. OR, I, 27, 3:915.

10. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 3:57.

11. John Singleton Mosby, *Stuart's Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign* (New York: Moffat, Yard, 1908), 80.

12. H. J. Eckenrode and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet: Lee's Warhorse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 178.

13. Taken from a statement published well after the war in the *Philadelphia Times*, November 1877, as quoted in Gallagher, *Lee the Soldier*, 385.

14. Longstreet, as quoted in Gallagher, *Lee the Soldier*, 385.

15. "Lee in Pennsylvania," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Being for the Most Part Contributions by Union and Confederate Officers*, new introduction by Roy F. Nichols, 4 vols. (1887–88; New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), 251.

16. Eckenrode and Conrad, *James Longstreet*, 180.

17. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 3:57.

18. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 3:815. Freeman also observed that "justice to Longstreet requires us to remember that the writer of this questionable narrative was an old man, soured by failure and embittered by circumstances." See Douglas S. Freeman, ed., *Lee's Dispatches: Unpublished Letters and Dispatches of General Robert E. Lee to the War Department of the Confederate States of America, 1862–1865* (New York: Putnam, 1957), 111.

19. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 3:46–47.

20. OR, I, 27, 3:916.

21. OR, I, 27, 3:306.

22. See Marshall, *Aide-de-Camp of Lee*, 201–2; Long, *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee*, 91–93; and Walter H. Taylor, *Four Years with Gen. Lee*, ed. James Robertson (1877; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 90–94.

23. OR, I, 27, 3:691.

24. H. B. McClellan, *I Rode with Jeb Stuart: The Life and Campaigns of Major General J. E. B. Stuart* (1886; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958).

25. It is interesting that Mosby made no mention of this "third order," which would of course have made his case even stronger. McClellan had not yet published, but surely Mosby would have known about the order had it existed.

26. Marshall, *Aide-de-Camp of Lee*, 210.

27. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 3:41.

28. McClellan, *I Rode with Jeb Stuart*, 317.

29. Mark Nesbitt, *Saber and Scapegoat* (Mechanicsburg PA: Stackpole Books, 1994), 65.

30. Most notably, see Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 107–9.

31. Coddington covers this same ground in considerable detail and reaches the same conclusions. “Early said it had been impossible for Ewell to order his cooperation with Stuart, for none of the Confederate general officers in Pa. knew of Stuart’s intention to cross the Potomac between Hooker’s army and Washington . . . [if] Lee did not know on June 22 and 23, when he conferred with Stuart, how Ewell was going to use his troops in Pa., then it was impossible for him to tell Ewell to order Early to look out for Stuart’s arrival in York.” See Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 660–61.

32. See Noah Andre Trudeau, *Gettysburg: A Testing of Courage* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 69. Surprisingly, Longacre also seems to accept McClellan’s account. See Edward G. Longacre, *The Cavalry at Gettysburg* (Rutherford NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 150.

33. See Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 324–25.

34. Jones, *Ranger Mosby*, 149.

## 5. The Great Debate over the Orders

1. *Battles and Leaders*, 3:251–53, and Mosby, *Stuart’s Cavalry*.

2. James A. Ramage, *Gray Ghost: The Life of Col. John Singleton Mosby* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 94.

3. Mosby, *Stuart’s Cavalry*, 89.

4. Mosby, *Stuart’s Cavalry*, 91.

5. Jubal Early, *Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War Between the States* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1912), 255. Mosby’s version of the facts would fit with the idea that Early had always been in the right-hand van of the army and that Stuart had been informed of this before leaving camp. I return to this issue in a later chapter.

6. See T. M. R. Talcott, “Stuart’s Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign,” *Southern Historical Society Papers* 37 (1909): 31–32.

7. Talcott, “Stuart’s Cavalry,” 21–37.

8. Ashdown and Caudill refer to Mosby’s account tellingly as “guerrilla history.” See Paul Ashdown and Edward Caudill, *The Mosby Myth: A Confederate Hero in Life and Legend* (Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resources Press, 2000), 63.

9. John W. Thomason, *Jeb Stuart* (New York: Scribner’s, 1930). I shall refer to some particular parts of this book later.

10. Nesbitt, *Saber and Scapegoat*.

11. Nesbitt, *Saber and Scapegoat*, chap. 4.

12. Nesbitt, *Saber and Scapegoat*, 193.

13. The title of Patrick Brennan’s recent article announces itself: “It Wasn’t Stuart’s Fault!” *North and South* 6, no. 5 (2003): 22–37. Brennan adds his own original touch of historical interpretation by suggesting that during Stuart’s absence Lee had been in touch with Beverly Robertson but must have ordered him to remain in Virginia, since that is what he did.

14. Esposito, *West Point Atlas of American Wars*, map 94.
15. David G. Martin, *Gettysburg, July 1* (Conshohocken PA: Combined Books, 1995). Lee also, one might add, did not explicitly order Stuart to see that his men loaded their firearms before going into action.
16. See Alan Nolan, "R. E. Lee and July 1 at Gettysburg," in Gallagher, *Lee the Soldier*, 484–86.
17. Dowdey and Manarin, *Wartime Papers*, 331.
18. Dowdey and Manarin, *Wartime Papers*, 403.
19. Dowdey and Manarin, *Wartime Papers*, 260.
20. Nolan, "R. E. Lee and July 1," 496. Trudeau, *Gettysburg*, 69n, takes the same line of argument.
21. Longacre, *Cavalry at Gettysburg*, 150.
22. Longacre, *Cavalry at Gettysburg*, 295n6.
23. Marshall, *Aide-de-Camp of Lee*, 208–9.
24. See Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 3:48–49.
25. Bowden and Ward, *Last Chance for Victory*, 118–20.
26. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 3:52–53.
27. OR, I, 27, 2:631–32.
28. Mosby, *Stuart's Cavalry*, 76.
29. William W. Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart* (New York: Scribner's, 1945), 222.
30. Sears, *Gettysburg*, 105.
31. Bowden and Ward, *Last Chance for Victory*, 114. Sears reaches the same conclusion; see Sears, *Gettysburg*, 105.
32. See Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 227–28.
33. Glenn Tucker, *High Tide at Gettysburg: The Campaign in Pennsylvania* (Columbus OH: Morningside Books, 1973), 37.

## 6. Options for the Ride North

1. Nesbitt, *Saber and Scapegoat*, 58–59.
2. OR, I, 27, 3:148–49.
3. Longacre, *Cavalry at Gettysburg*, 151.
4. This route today would be following Virginia State Roads 713 to 611 to 580 to 187, a total distance of 40 miles. Route 187 now crosses the Potomac on a new bridge to Brunswick (formerly Berlin). Md. Route 187 is still known locally as "The Berlin Turnpike."
5. Marshall, *Aide-de-Camp of Lee*, 208. In discussing Stuart's choice for the ride north, Stuart's aide Blackford takes note of this route but dismisses it, saying without explanation, "It was impossible for him to move along the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge between the mountains and Meade's forces." See Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart*, 222. In fairness to Blackford, he may have been thinking of Stuart's moving

up the eastern slopes of the Bull Run mountain range, which would in fact have been difficult given the Union troop movements under way.

6. Peter W. Roper, *Jedediah Hotchkiss: Rebel Mapmaker and Virginia Businessman* (Shippensburg PA: White Mane, 1992). The Hotchkiss map collection, amounting to several hundred maps, is on deposit in the Library of Congress. Several are of the valleys, and they all look like the one reproduced here as map 3.

7. Woodworth, *Beneath a Northern Sky*, frontispiece map; Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *The First Day at Gettysburg* (Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 1992), frontispiece map; and Gallagher, *Lee the Soldier*, 386. Many others could also be cited.

8. Bowden and Ward, *Last Chance for Victory*, 118-20.

9. The most concise account of these movements, based on the OR and other accounts, is to be found in Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, chap. 5. See also Howard, *Autobiography*, chap. 24.

10. J. H. Kidd, *A Cavalryman with Custer* (1908; New York, Bantam Books, 1991), 55.

11. Gen. Samuel Heintzelman commanded the Washington Military District, which included the units along the Potomac up to Harpers Ferry; he wrote to Gen. Robert Schenck, commander of the Maryland Military District in Baltimore, that it appeared the "rebel cavalry must have crossed the Potomac above the mouth of the Monocacy [roughly at Point of Rocks] . . . I see no necessity for any patrols in the rear of my troops." OR I, 27, 2:182.

12. Trudeau, *Gettysburg*, 64.

13. Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart*, 222, as quoted approvingly in Palmer, *Lee Moves North*, 71.

14. Sears, *Gettysburg*, 105.

15. Palmer, *Lee Moves North*, 70-72.

16. Napoleon Bonaparte, as quoted by David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 194.

17. Nesbitt finds also that even had Stuart followed the second option, which according to him Lee had ruled out, he could not have arrived much sooner than he did. He argues that it was about forty-five miles from Rector's Crossroads to Shepherdstown and another forty-five to Emmitsburg. "Realistically, Lee could not have expected to hear from Stuart until the 28th and quite possibly the 29th, allowing for military exigencies. No reasonable man could have expected more from Stuart." The "military exigencies" would then have consumed two days, if Stuart started on June 25.

18. Mosby, *Stuart's Cavalry*, 175.

## 7. Stuart's Conduct of the Ride North

1. As was discussed earlier, the Confederate cavalry was poorly mounted by this point in the war and not supported by any remount or supply system. There was little Stuart could do about this. To make matters worse, his own enormous physical stamina and drive often made him unaware of the physical limitations of his forces.

2. OR, I, 27, 3:53.
3. McClellan, *I Rode with Jeb Stuart*, 315.
4. Tucker, *High-Tide at Gettysburg*, 36. The best accounts of Stuart's movements north are to be found in Longacre, *Lee's Cavalrymen*, chap. 15, and Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, chap. 17.
5. Marshall, *Aide-de-Camp of Lee*, 216. Stuart took care in picking his dispatch riders and often gave them credit by name in his reports for successful missions. His report on Gettysburg mentioned no name for this rider.
6. Longacre, *Cavalry at Gettysburg*, 137.
7. John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital*, 2 vols., ed. Howard Swiggert (New York: Old Hickory Bookshop, 1935), 2:366.
8. Coddington concludes that the value of the "lost message" has been overestimated by most authors, since Stuart could not have known much about Union intentions from his brief encounter. See Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 63on34.
9. McClellan, *I Rode with Jeb Stuart*, 324; see also the vivid account in Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 324–27.
10. OR, I, 27, 2:630.
11. OR, I, 27, 2:694.
12. Longacre, *Cavalry at Gettysburg*, chaps. 8 and 9.
13. Thomas, *Bold Dragoon*, 255.
14. "Numerous men covered all or part of that distance while asleep in the saddle. A few were so overcome with fatigue that they fell unconscious to the ground . . . many animals were also at the end of their endurance . . . several went lame . . . the roads north were littered with the carcasses of mounts that had played out." Longacre, *Lee's Cavalrymen*, 21.
15. Thomas, *Bold Dragoon*, 255.
16. Thomas, "Eggs, Aldie, Shepherdstown and J. E. B. Stuart," 101–21.
17. Thomas, *Bold Dragoon*, 121.
18. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants*, 3:68. The question of the timing of the newspaper stories is also discussed in Bowden and Ward, *Last Chance for Victory*, 130. Coddington concludes that there could not, in fact, have been an arrangement for a meeting in York between Early and Stuart. See Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 60–61nn112, 114.
19. Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart*, 228.
20. OR, I, 27, 2:697.
21. Campbell Brown, *Campbell Brown's Civil War: With Ewell and the Army of Northern Virginia*, ed. Terry L. Jones (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 198.
22. Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 435n5.
23. Foote, *Civil War*, 2:481.
24. See Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, vol. 2, app. 1, 80. Freeman cites the OR and an article in the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, but neither appears to give direct support to this account of what happened.

25. Marshall, *Aide-de-Camp of Lee*, 154.
26. Thomason, *Jeb Stuart*, 446–47.
27. Davis, *Jeb Stuart*, 334.
28. Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, 3:548; McIntosh, “Review of the Gettysburg Campaign,” 95.
29. Hampton, as quoted in Thomas, *Bold Dragoon*, 253. Admittedly, Hampton, while a loyal subordinate, was not a fan of Stuart.
30. Thomas, *Bold Dragoon*, 255.
31. A letter quoted in Bernice-Marie Yates, *Jeb Stuart Speaks: An Interview with Lee’s Cavalryman* (Shippensburg PA: White Mane, 1997), 65.
32. Marshall, *Aide-de-Camp of Lee*, 156–57.

### 8. The Battle as It Unfolded

1. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 182.
2. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 182.
3. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 186.
4. The younger Lee then added, “[Even] without orders, it was his duty to do so as commander of the cavalry.” See Fitzhugh Lee, “Causes of Lee’s Defeat at Gettysburg,” *Southern Historical Society Papers* 4 (1877): 74.
5. Henri de Jomini, as quoted in Crane Brinton et al., “Jomini,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Edward Mead Earle, 84 (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944), 83.
6. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 189.
7. Moltke, as quoted in Hajo Holborn, “Moltke and Schlieffen: The Prussian-German School,” in Earle, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, 185.
8. Freeman, *Lee’s Lieutenants*, 3:60.
9. Freeman, *Lee’s Lieutenants*, 3:64.
10. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 263–64.
11. Martin, *Gettysburg*, 29, quoting a Heth letter written after the war. Still quoting the same source, he says Heth then evidently uttered the famous words, “If there is no objection, I will take my division tomorrow and go to Gettysburg and get those shoes.” Hill replied, “None in the world.”
12. Gary W. Gallagher, “Confederate Corps Leadership on the First Day at Gettysburg,” in Gallagher, *First Day at Gettysburg*, 45.
13. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 281. See also the detailed account in Gallagher, “Confederate Corps Leadership on the First Day at Gettysburg.”
14. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 280.
15. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 280.
16. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 316.
17. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 317.
18. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 309.
19. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 315. Isaac Trimble, only an observer without a command, was with Ewell, and there ensued their famous confrontation over

taking the heights. Trimble urged such a move and offered to lead it if given even a regiment, but Ewell declined his offer. See Emory Thomas, *R. E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: Norton, 1995), 296. See also Gallagher, “Confederate Corps Leadership.”

20. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 309. See also Gallagher, “Confederate Corps Leadership.” Lee himself later expressed the opinion that had T. J. Jackson, the quintessential bold leader, been in Ewell’s place that day, the attack would certainly have taken place. See Robert W. Krick, “Three Confederate Disasters on Oak Ridge,” in Gallagher, *First Day at Gettysburg*, 139, and the sources cited in 163n73.

21. Dowdey and Manarin, *Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee*, 576.

22. OR, I, 27, 3:71.

23. Freeman, *Lee’s Lieutenants*, 2:66.

24. Martin, *Gettysburg*, 210.

25. Krick, “Three Confederate Disasters,” 138.

26. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 339. Jenkins himself and his main body arrived only much later in the day.

27. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 329–20.

28. Freeman, *Lee’s Lieutenants*, 3:75.

29. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 284–86.

30. Esposito, *West Point Atlas*, 99.

31. Michael Shahara, *The Killer Angels* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974).

32. See Chuck Teague, “Leadership Impaired?” *North and South* 6, no. 4 (2003): 69–78. Teague surveys nicely the thin literature of other studies on the topic. Lee may have also suffered from the “soldiers’ disease,” diarrhea, during the campaign, but this was endemic in the army for all ranks. See Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart*, 230.

33. Justus Scheibert, *Seven Months in the Rebel States during the North American War, 1863*, ed. W. S. Hoole (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1958), 221.

34. Russell F. Weigley, *A Great Civil War: A Political and Military History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 519.

35. Lee, *Recollections and Letters*, 102. Freeman, *Lee’s Lieutenants*, 3:62–63, notes Lee’s great “anxiety” over Stuart’s fate.

36. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 659n77.

37. Stephen Z. Starr, *The Union Cavalry in the Civil War*, 3 vols. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979).

38. OR, I 27, 2:699. Coddington covers this episode in some detail. See Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 520–23.

39. See Longacre, *Lincoln’s Cavalrymen*, 91–92. Cooke did not receive another field post during the rest of the war.

40. An excellent detailed account of this fight is Eric Wittenberg, *Protecting the Flank: The Battles of Brinkerhoff’s Ridge and the East Cavalry Fields* (Celina OH: Ironclad, 2002); also see Eric Wittenberg, “East Cavalry Field,” *North and South* 6, no. 3 (2003): 54–67. Other accounts are to be found in Longacre’s works (*Cavalry in the*

*Gettysburg Campaign; Lee's Cavalrymen; and Lincoln's Cavalrymen*) as well as Starr's (*Union Cavalry*). Valuable firsthand accounts by participants include Rummel, *Cavalry on the Roads to Gettysburg*; William Brooke Rawle, *With Gregg in the Gettysburg Campaign* (Philadelphia: McLaughlin, 1884); and William E. Miller, "The Cavalry Battles Near Gettysburg," in *Battles and Leaders*, 3, pt. 2, 400–409.

41. In his report on this fight, Stuart complained that Fitzhugh Lee and Hampton had revealed the Confederate presence to Gregg by leaving the concealment of the woods for open ground when they arrived, which almost certainly was not the real problem. Stuart complained further that this had not been the kind of battle he wanted to fight.

42. Weigley, *Great Civil War*, 519.

43. See Paul D. Walker, *The Cavalry Battle That Saved the Union: Custer vs. Stuart at Gettysburg* (Gretna LA: Pelican, 2002); Tom Carhart, *Lost Triumph: Lee's Real Plan at Gettysburg and Why It Failed* (New York: Putnam, 2005); and Troy Harman, *Lee's Real Plan at Gettysburg* (Mechanicsburg PA: Stackpole Books, 2003).

44. OR, I, 27, 2:956–57. Gregg wrote his memoirs, but did not elaborate on his reasoning for taking the exact position he did. See David M. Gregg, *The Second Cavalry Division of the Army of the Potomac in the Gettysburg Campaign* (Philadelphia, 1907).

### 9. The Consequences of Stuart's Raid

1. Jay Luvaas, ed., *The Civil War in the Writings of Col. G. F. R. Henderson* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 231.

2. Thomason, *Jeb Stuart*, 446–47. Like Thomason's, the accounts by Mosby and McClellan cited and discussed earlier repeat Stuart's descriptions of the achievements of the raid. Such inflated accounts of Stuart's ride continue in the recent literature: see Theodore S. Garnett, *Riding with Stuart: Reminiscences of an Aide-de-Camp*, ed. Robert J. Trout (Shippensburg PA: White Mane, 1994), 110; also Brennan, "It Wasn't Stuart's Fault," 22–39.

3. OR, I, 27, 1:67.

4. Evidently Kilpatrick erroneously concluded that Stuart was scouting for Lee's army, which was north of Gettysburg at New Berlin, and so informed Pleasonton, his corps commander. See Rummel, *Cavalry on the Roads to Gettysburg*, 204–6.

5. Rummel, *Cavalry on the Roads to Gettysburg*, 145.

6. Fishel, *Secret War for the Union*, 487.

7. OR, I, 27, 2:66–67. See also Rummel, *Cavalry on the Roads to Gettysburg*, chap. 2, on the Union cavalry dispositions.

8. Fishel, *Secret War for the Union*, 486–87.

9. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 207. Note that Coddington wrote this before Fishel's important and revealing research was published.

10. Eicher, *Longest Night*, 510.

11. Philip Katcher, *The Army of Northern Virginia*, Great Armies (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003), 216.

12. Martin, *Gettysburg*, 211.



13. Luvaas, *Civil War*, 232.
14. Luvaas, *Civil War*, 233. Henderson also explains why Lee rejected the idea of Longstreet's flank march on the night of July 1. "The answer is simple—the absence of the cavalry . . . how was Lee to ascertain whether the enemy had not a force posted to his left rear ready to crush the head of a turning column?" (235).
15. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 192, 281, 312.
16. Martin, *Gettysburg*, 14. This unit had actually been in Hanover two days before Stuart arrived there. See Rummel, *Cavalry on the Roads to Gettysburg*, 130.
17. OR, I 27, 3:985.
18. Stuart, as Quoted by Mosby, *Stuart's Cavalry*, 201-2.
19. Mosby, "The Confederate Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign," in *Battles and Leaders*, 252.
20. Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 184. Imboden, being far to the west of the army, was not considered a part of Stuart's command, but Jenkins, Jones, and Robertson clearly were. Imboden's very late arrival in Gettysburg provoked a rare public outburst of anger from Lee.

#### 10. Stuart and the Defeat at Gettysburg

1. Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, vol. 3, annex 1, 547-51. His other reasons were Ewell's failure to take the heights on the first day; the five-mile extent of the battle lines, which made Lee's lines everywhere too "thin"; Longstreet's disgruntled slowness in attacking on the right on the second day; and poor communication and coordination among the various corps of the army, leading to piecemeal attacks, one at a time.
2. Tom Rosser, as quoted by Thomas, *Bold Dragoon*, 253.
3. Harry Heth, "Causes of Lee's Defeat at Gettysburg," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 4 (1877): 63.
4. Lee, "Causes of Lee's Defeat," 74.
5. Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 228.
6. G. M. Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer*, ed. Bell Wiley (Wilmington NC: Broadfoot, 1991), 153-54. And he added, "Lee . . . and Stuart by him, could almost have chosen the spot where he would be sure to defeat the Union army."
7. Frederick Maurice, *Robert E. Lee, the Soldier* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 204.
8. Lee, "Causes of Lee's Defeat," 74-75.
9. Weigley, *Great Civil War*, 116. However, Lee had not in fact totally given up his supply line south and felt that, in the wake of a successful battle with his cavalry in place, he could easily resupply his army's ammunition needs. See Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, 3:50-51.
10. George Pickett, as quoted by Brook Simpson, "If Properly Led: Command Relationships at Gettysburg," in *Civil War Generals in Defeat*, ed. Steven Woodworth (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 181.
11. Sears, *Gettysburg*, 106.
12. Luvaas, *Civil War*, 236.

13. Isaac Trimble, as quoted in Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, 3:58.

14. Long, *Memoirs*, 268–69.

15. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 656. Even some modern critics of Lee's strategy in the campaign concede this possibility. "A victory on northern soil might aggravate internal dissension in the North and thus weaken Union resolve . . . there was reason to believe that the Army of Northern Virginia would never again face the Army of the Potomac on such relatively equal terms. See Gary W. Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 73.

16. Harper's Illustrated Weekly, *The Civil War*, facsimile reproduction (1882; New York: Crown, 1965), 503.

17. Alexander Stephens, *A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States*, 2 vols. (Chicago: National, 1868–70), 2:557–68.

18. Freeman, *Lee's Dispatches*, 110.



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